United Nations S/PV.7903

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7903rd meeting

Tuesday, 21 March 2017, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Rycroft	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Fernández Revollo
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Vaverka
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2017/206)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2017/206)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Maman Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Monseigneur Marcel Utembi, President of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo; and Ms. Marie-Madeleine Kalala of the Common Cause Network.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/206, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Sidikou.

Mr. Sidikou (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity you have offered me to speak to the Security Council today about the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As emphasized in the report (S/2017/206) of the Secretary-General dated 10 March on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/2017/206), the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has undergone profound changes over the past months, thereby requiring an adjustment of the priorities and approach of MONUSCO.

The full implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016, which paves the way, in the clearest possible manner, to the holding of elections, requires the full support of the United Nations.

Some impediments will have to be removed. The ruling majority and the Rassemblement have opposing views on how to appoint the Prime Minister, as well as on the allocation of key roles in the Ministries for Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Defence and Justice in the transitional Government that will be formed. The role that the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO) could play in the finalization of the special provisions is also a source of discord.

The death of Etienne Tshisekedi had a significant impact on the political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, further delaying the finalization of the special provisions, the appointment of the Prime Minister and the establishment of the national agreement and electoral process monitoring committee.

As long as the political dialogue remains at an impasse, there is a risk that tensions will rise. In February, some of the seminaries and parishes of the Catholic Church in Kananga, Kasai, Kinshasa and Lubumbashi in Katanga were attacked, presumably because of increased frustration among certain segments of the population at seeing the political process stall.

However, I wish to note that in the past few days the situation seems to be moving in the right direction. The appointment of the Deputy Secretary-General of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, Félix Tshisekedi, as President of the Rassemblement, and of Pierre Lumbi, a representative of the Groupe des sept opposition coalition, to the head of the Conseil des sages of the Rassemblement resulted in the resumption of negotiations on the special provisions under the auspices of CENCO on 16 March. In addition, the Presidents of both houses of Parliament called for an irreversible and credible electoral process and expressed their support for the efforts of CENCO.

Notwithstanding the delays in the political process, significant progress has been made in updating the voter registry. To date, more than 19 million voters have been enrolled, and the enrolment process is about to begin in the two remaining enrolment areas.

The logistical and technical support of MONUSCO to the enrolment process will come to an end at the end of this month. At that time MONUSCO will have transported approximately 3,000 tons of enrolment material through the Democratic Republic of the Congo. If authorized by the Security Council, MONUSCO is willing to provide technical and logistical support to the electoral process that goes beyond the updating of the voter registry.

(*spoke in English*)

The deteriorating security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a source of major concern. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General, violence and threats to civilians are no longer concentrated in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone. Community-based violence and inter-ethnic clashes have spread from areas already affected by armed conflict, such as the Kivus, to Tanganyika, the three Kasai provinces, Lomami and Kongo Central. Armed group activity in the east has also increased, particularly of late with the resurfacing of former elements of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23).

The conduct of coordinated operations by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and MONUSCO against armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have helped maintain military pressure on the Allied Democratic Forces, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri, disrupting their activities. The FARDC has also been involved in actions against former M-23 elements who had recently crossed into the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The resurgence of violence in certain areas in the rest of the country has been exacerbated by the uncertain political situation, as well as the manipulation of grievances for political ends, and the provision of support to armed militias by some political actors. The increasing use of self-defence militias acting along ethnic lines points to a growing sense of insecurity and uncertainty. The risk of electoral violence also remains high, mainly in urban areas. The potential for violence is likely to increase further the longer the implementation of the 31 December agreement is stalled, thereby prolonging the current political uncertainty.

The spread of violence has been characterized by a significant increase in human rights violations. The year 2016 witnessed a 30 per cent increase in human rights violations as compared to 2015, with MONUSCO documenting a total of 5,190 human rights violations throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo. State agents were responsible for 64 per cent of those violations, and armed groups were responsible for the remaining 36 per cent. I am particularly concerned by reports of the excessive use of force, human rights violations and the presence mass graves in the Kasai provinces. I have encouraged the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to conduct thorough investigations and to ensure that the perpetrators of those acts are held to full account. MONUSCO of course stands ready to provide its full support for the carrying out of those investigations.

I would like to emphasize again that only political solutions can address and halt the rising levels of violence now being witnessed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For our part, MONUSCO remains fully engaged in protecting and promoting human rights and the political space and is strongly engaging with the relevant authorities on a regular basis to ensure that perpetrators of human rights violations are held accountable for their actions and are brought to justice. MONUSCO is also strictly applying the United Nations human rights due diligence policy for any and all support provided to State security actors in the implementation of its mandate.

I am also deeply concerned about the deteriorating socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The continued depreciation of the Congolese franc, which has lost over 30 per cent of its value in the past year, the lack of foreign-currency reserves and the fiscal shortfall are having an increasing impact on the livelihoods of Congolese citizens, and will continue to do so in the coming months.

Those developments are coupled with a deteriorating humanitarian situation due to the intensifying violence. A total of 2.2 million persons are currently forcibly displaced. In Tanganyika province alone, violence forced approximataely 102,000 persons into displacement in the last quarter of 2016, while the violence in the Kasais had displaced an estimated 225,000 persons by the end of January this year.

The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan is funded at just over 60 per cent, putting pressure on the humanitarian community to respond to these new displacements. At the same time, refugees from South Sudan continue to cross into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees having registered 28,000 refugees in areas close to the border by January of this year.

As highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General, the 31 December agreement provides a clear path towards the holding of elections, setting the stage for MONUSCO's drawdown and exit. The Mission's main strategic objective during the coming months will therefore be to support the establishment of an environment conducive to the timely holding of peaceful, credible and inclusive elections, in accordance with the provisions of the agreement. Accordingly, MONUSCO has already undertaken adjustments to its posture and operations. The Mission will continue to make such adjustments as may be required in the months ahead to ensure that it is well positioned to use the full range of tools and resources at its disposal to support the political and electoral process, contribute to the protection of civilians and assist with stabilization efforts.

The Mission has provided its full support to the CENCO-led dialogue efforts and in the updating of the voter registry. It has strengthened its civilian and military presence and operations in new areas of concern outside the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, specifically the Kasais and Tanganyika. We have also initiated a process of shifting key functions from Goma to Kinshasa, in order to strengthen the Mission headquarters. I have requested that the MONUSCO protection-of-civilians strategy be revised to address the threat to the civilian population from armed groups.

The report of the Secretary-General also sets out a package of measures aimed at enhancing the ability of the MONUSCO force to support the achievement of the Mission's strategic objectives in the current challenging security context through the adoption of a more mobile, flexible and agile posture. The Secretary-General has recommended the deployment of two additional formed police units (FPUs) to help the Congolese authorities address the potential threat of electoral and politically motivated violence in key urban centres where there is no police or FPU presence.

The primary responsibility for the implementation of the agreement rests with its signatories and will require the same level of commitment and compromise that led to its signing, on 31 December. MONUSCO will continue to provide support for the implementation of the agreement, while also supporting efforts to address the mounting threats faced by the civilian population during the transition period.

I thank you again, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council today. I look forward to the ensuing discussions.

The President: I thank Mr. Sidikou for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Monseigneur Utembi.

Monseigneur Utembi (*spoke in French*): The National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO) would like to sincerely thank the President of the Security Council for having invited us to brief the members of the Council on the sociopolitical, security and economic situation prevailing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the run-up to the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

We would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the ongoing support of the United Nations in the maintenance of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To that end, resolution 2277 (2016) calls upon the political and social stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to engage in an open and inclusive political dialogue on the holding of the presidential election in accordance with the Constitution. This two-stage dialogue, convened by the President of the Republic, led to the comprehensive and inclusive political agreement signed on 31 December 2016 at the Kinshasa Interdiocesan Centre, whose rapid and full implementation CENCO strongly urges.

With regard to the socio-political situation, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is currently in the throes of a sociopolitical, security and economic crisis of increasingly alarming proportions. All the elected bodies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have exceeded their mandate, a first in the history of our country since its independence.

Since the drafters of the Constitution did not envisage such a state of affairs, the comprehensive and inclusive political agreement signed at the Kinshasa Interdiocesan Centre is the only road map that could rescue the country from its current institutional crisis. Unfortunately, the special provisions for the implementation of the agreement have met with difficulties in being concluded. While the population is eagerly awaiting elections, the political status quo resulting from the intransigence of the negotiators on the remaining points of divergence, and kept in place by political chicanery and a lack of genuine political will, runs the risk of indefinitely postponing the full implementation of the 31 December agreement. It is also worth mentioning the delays in the implementation of measures designed to ease political tensions in the country.

The security situation, which is characterized by bloody clashes and human rights violations, remains a source of concern for a large part of the country, particularly in the Kasai provinces, where the rebellion against the central authorities, waged by Chief Kamuina Nsapu militia forces, is spiralling out of control. We deplore the hundreds of deaths, the exploitation of minors, who are being doubly victimized — by recruitment by the militias and the disproportionate acts of repression by the police — the interruption of schooling, the dearth of humanitarian assistance and the imminent risk of famine. There is even talk of mass graves. In the same area, two United Nations experts were abducted, as well as one interpreter and three motorcycle taxi drivers.

The Lord's Resistance Army is operating in the far north, together with the Mbororo, with the goal of fomenting misery among the local population. In North Kivu, in particular in the Beri and Lubero territories, a series of massacres of the population continues. In Tanganyika, the deadly clashes between the Bantu and the Twa that have resulted in the forced displacement of families are still simmering. There are continuing tensions in Kongo Central and in Kinshasa, which experienced deadly confrontations on 19 and 20 September and on 19 and 20 December 2016.

I should point out that the Catholic Church is also a victim of this tense and insecure situation. It has been targeted all over the country by hoodlums and insurgents who accuse it of not doing enough to enable the authorities to implement the New Year's Eve 2016 agreement. We deplore the physical and verbal threats that have been made to clerics in a number of dioceses, where some bishops have received threatening phone calls from insurgents. Some Church buildings, including presbyteries and convents, have been attacked, burned and looted.

With regard to the economy, the sociopolitical crisis, which is exacerbated by the generalized insecurity throughout the country, is not good for the nation's economic health. The value of the Congolese franc is falling daily against foreign currencies. Many public and private companies are idle, and it is the people who are the first victims, since their purchasing power is not enough to meet their basic needs.

What does the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo want from the Security Council? If this crisis continues, it runs the risk of rendering the agreement of 31 December obsolete and delaying the elections scheduled for December 2017, or indeed even calling for a referendum or amending the Constitution. In that regard, in the wake of the extraordinary meeting of the Assembly of Bishops on 20 to 25 February, CENCO appealed to the people of the Congo in an address entitled "Say no to the deadlock". We believe that the only way to control the crisis is through the comprehensive implementation of the New Year's Eve agreement and the formation of a national Government that possesses enough legitimacy, as well as the trust of the Congolese people, to enable it to organize the elections and ensure a democratic transfer of power.

Based on that, CENCO recommends, first, that the Security Council give political, diplomatic and legal support at the international level to the agreement of 31 December, as the only realistic road map that can enable the Democratic Republic of the Congo to emerge from the crisis. Secondly, we recommend that the Council support the institutions created on the basis of the agreement. Thirdly, the Council should renew and strengthen MONUSCO's mandate by reactivating its Intervention Brigade in order to ensure the security of the civilian population and give logistical support to the next elections.

Where the international community is concerned, particularly the African Union, the European Union, Great Britain and the United States of America, we recommend, first, that they provide substantial financial and logistical support to the organization of the forthcoming elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Secondly, we urge them to provide humanitarian assistance to all the victims of the atrocities I have mentioned. Thirdly, they should put pressure on the political and social stakeholders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to commit to effectively implementing the agreement of 31 December. And, lastly, they should collaborate with the Congolese authorities in conducting an independent and objective investigation aimed at identifying those responsible for the massacres that have occurred, particularly in Beni, Tanganyika and the Kasai provinces, and for the bloody clashes in Kinshasa.

The President: I thank Monseigneur Utembi for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Kalala.

Ms. Kalala (*spoke in French*): Fate often has surprises in store for us. Almost 11 years ago, I was here in this Chamber to discuss the problem of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo and how to end it (see S/PV.5494). I remember that we were pleased to see that there had been progress on the problem, but we noted that it had yet to be eliminated among the armed groups that were still active in the eastern part of the country. At the time I was Minister for Human Rights on behalf of civil society in the transitional Government. To be exact, it was July 2006, on the eve of our country's first free, credible and transparent elections, which we were all eagerly looking forward to. And here I am again today, against all expectations, with another opportunity to address the Security Council on the subject of the sociopolitical situation in my beloved country, for which I am honoured and very grateful.

While at that time the future looked bright, today we are compelled to admit that our efforts to achieve national cohesion have been crushed and that the issue of child soldiers is once again on the agenda. Since the presidential election of 2011, and in the wake of the failure to hold the elections that were supposed to bring the transfer of power in 2016, we are in the grip of a profound crisis, linked to the legitimacy of our institutions. Since that time we have had to deal with the outbreak of new insurgent movements such as the Kamwina Nsapu militia in Kasai Central and Bundu dia Kongo in Kongo Central and the fighting between Twa and Bantu communities in Tanganyika. We are also witnessing the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) reconstituted; a resurgence of petty criminality; a stagnant economic sector and its corollary, unemployment; galloping depreciation of the currency, which brings with it reduced purchasing power and makes life more precarious; corruption, human rights violations and restrictions on fundamental freedoms such as the right to peaceful protest — for example, young people being confronted as they demand a healthier environment — obstacles to people's access to basic social needs; the deterioration of infrastructure and so on and so forth. We can sum it up by saying that we have a failed State. Our citizens can no longer trust their institutions.

Need I remind the Council that it is a well-known fact that it is women, the elderly and children who are the first victims in such situations? How many times in this Chamber have we talked about the sexual violence that has been done to women in my country or their and their children's dreadful living conditions on the streets or accused of witchcraft? I am not going to revisit that. But I must point to the weakness of a judicial system that, despite some efforts, has been unable to provide a genuine response to the demands of justice. What is there to say about women's low rate of participation in decision-making? We should recall that of 32 participants in the meetings of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO) only three were women — less than 10 per cent, the average in most of the country's institutions, when male-female parity is enshrined in our Constitution.

In order to respond to this dysfunctional State, political dialogue has emerged as the only way out of the crisis, as Monseigneur Utembi, President of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo, so eloquently said just now. In the firm belief of the reality of this, and aware that our long-suffering peoples are no longer willing to accept the path of arms, civil society has engaged in political negotiations under the auspices of both the African Union and CENCO, whose comprehensive and inclusive political agreement was signed on 31 December 2016.

Unfortunately, three months later, the process seems to have stalled. The signing of the specific arrangements to define the manner of implementing the agreement is overdue. The political actors are unable to honour the commitments they made freely. Unfortunately, every delay takes us further away from the possibility of holding of presidential, legislative and provincial elections, set for December 2017. No electoral calendar has been published thus far, and the people are increasingly tense.

That is why we believe it is urgent to collaborate with the African Union to further support CENCO's mediation efforts to swiftly set up a Government and, above all, a national council to follow up the implementation of the agreement, an institution charged with ensuring proper preparations for the elections and compliance with the road map. It should be borne in mind that such actions would contribute to the rapid implementation of a purely Congolese solution to the crisis.

I now turn to the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Civil society welcomes the Mission's actions both in its social and peacekeeping efforts and in its support for the electoral process. The people remember the successful operations it carried out jointly with the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo to fight various armed groups, including the M-23. However, people cannot explain the increase in killings in the east of the country, particularly in Beni, where not a week goes by without unimaginably cruel murders reported. The online circulation of those images have been met with total indifference on the part of the international community. "I am Beni" does not seem to garner as much attention as "I am Paris" or "I am Munich".

The Congolese people are still traumatized by the memories of attacks on villages located near MONUSCO camps, while the Mission did nothing to protect them. We are told that MONUSCO is a peacekeeping force that cannot impose peace. Go explain that to the poor citizens who see that the Mission has weapons and expect only its protection. I will perhaps be tactless in saying that this stance revolts both civil society and the population, which likens MONUSCO to a force that counts the dead. That is why, even as we welcome the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate, civil society calls upon the United Nations to reinforce it so as to enable the soldiers to play a more proactive and deterrent role. They must prevent incidents, not give in to them.

Since opportunity makes the thief, I would like to raise the painful issue of children fathered by members of United Nations contingents and abandoned after they are conceived. How can those innocent children be compensated for that injustice? Many grow up penniless in Goma, Kisangani, Mbandaka or elsewhere? Many have joined the ranks of street children, which we call "schégués" or "kulunas". I think that it would not be too much to ask for the Council to consider that issue and to respond in a way that acknowledges the situation and provides care for those children — because those who ought to bring hope cannot instead bring despair. We wish to keep hope alive.

The President: I thank Ms. Kalala for her briefing.

The representative of Uruguay has asked for the floor to make a statement.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation has asked for the floor because it believes that the purpose of briefing meetings of the Security Council is precisely that — to inform the membership on the work of the Council and, at the same time, for members to express their country's opinion, belief or position on the issue under consideration in the Council.

In that connection, I welcome Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and I thank Monseigneur Utembi and Ms. Kalala for their important briefings. We also convey our deep gratitude to Mr. Maman Sidikou, his entire team and the personnel of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for the work they carry out in very complex conditions.

I reiterate the commitment of Uruguay to restoring stability and peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, not only as an elected member of the Security Council but also as a consistent MONUSCO troop-contributing country for the past 16 years.

The broad and inclusive political agreement reached on 31 December, thanks to the important mediation role of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO), offers a viable path to the holding of peaceful, credible and inclusive elections — thus empowering the Democratic Republic of the Congo to move towards a more stable future. Nevertheless, nearly three months after it was signed, the implementation of the new political agreement remains stalled due to differences among signatory parties concerning the carrying out of the transition arrangements.

As the Secretary-General indicatein his report (S/2017/206), the most pressing task for the United Nations is to closely collaborate with its primary regional and international partners to support the implementation of the transition arrangements spelled out in the political agreement and to contribute to creating a favourable environment for the holding of elections and the peaceful transfer of power as quickly as possible — December 2017 at the latest, pursuant to the agreement.

Uruguay is concerned about certain negative trends in the country for several months now. One of these is that insecurity is no longer primarily limited to the east of the country, but rather has spread to other areas such as the provinces of Kasai, Central Congo and Tanganyika. Violence between communities and challenges to the authority of the State are on the rise, to such a degree that the United Nations has also been a victim, with the recent disappearance of two members of the Group of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004). Similarly, the threat of violence in the main urban zones is also increasing as the election approaches.

Another alarming trend is the significant increase in violations of human rights, owing primarily to the shrinking democratic space. Uruguay reiterates that protecting and respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms is the responsibility of the national authorities, just as they must themselves show the greatest restraint in their responses to the legitimate protests of the population. Similarly, we call upon members of the opposition to act responsibly in ensuring peaceful demonstrations.

In the coming days, the Council will be negotiating the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate. Uruguay believes that the Secretary-General's recommendations to renew MONUSCO's mandate are valid, responsible and are adapted to the reality on the ground. In that regard, we are of the view that, in addition to lending its good offices and support to the political process, which is crucial at this time, MONUSCO must have an appropriate mandate and resources that would increase its ability to protect civilians and monitor human rights issues, especially where there is high risk of urban violence during the upcoming electoral period.

In a highly tense political situation, in which the security environment has deteriorated and there have been serious violations of human rights, it is very difficult to understand the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Government's attempt to reduce the scope of MONUSCO and seek an exit strategy.

In conclusion, I should like to make it very clear that there is no more time now for political games. It is time for the political actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to commit to implementing the agreement that they themselves signed. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deserve stability, democracy and peace in their country.

The President: I now give the floor to the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. She Okitundu (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): First, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. My delegation is particularly honoured to see the United Kingdom — a friend — steering the Council's deliberations. I would like to thank the Council for this opportunity to speak at today's meeting on the situation in my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Secretary-General António Guterres and to convey to him best wishes on behalf of my Government as, like his predecessor, he discharges the noble mission assigned to the United Nations to bring much-needed peace to countries throughout the world, including my own. On behalf of the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Security Council for its continued and tireless efforts over the past several years to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country and ensure its peace and stability.

My delegation takes note of the report (S/2017/206) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which was presented by Mr. Maman Sambo Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To clarify, I believe that it is important to revisit a number of points in the report, in particular with regard to the political situation, the electoral process, the security situation, the human rights situation and the strategic dialogue between the Government and MONUSCO.

With the regard to the political situation, the Congolese political class as a whole, as well as other stakeholders in the country, have expressed a legitimate need for an inclusive political dialogue to address the sociopolitical crisis that my country faces. In that regard, on 28 November 2015, His Excellency President Joseph Kabila Kabange called for an inclusive national political dialogue following eight months of preliminary talks with the opposition. That dialogue led to two agreements — one signed on 18 October 2016 at the headquarters of the African Union, following mediation by the African Union, headed by Mr. Edem Kodjo, and the other signed on 31 December 2016 at the Archdiocese of Kinshasa under the auspices of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO). Although both agreements sought to explore ways and means to organize free, democratic and transparent elections by consensus-based management of the pre-electoral period, the dialogue held on 18 October 2016 was considered to be non-inclusive because the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement, the Front pour le Respect de la Constitution and a section of civil society did not participate. CENCO also suspended its participation.

After evaluating the two agreements, it must be acknowledged that the same issues raised at the headquarters of the African Union were also addressed at the Archdiocese of Kinshasa during the signing of the agreement on 31 December 2016, and they received identical comments. Such issues included the commitment of all parties to scrupulously respect the Constitution and the country's laws; the affirmation of the continuity of the State and its institutions; the appointment of a Prime Minister from the opposition; the establishment of a monitoring structure for the agreement; the holding of presidential, legislative, national and provincial elections, in that order; the election calendar and the recognition of the Independent National Electoral Commission as the organizer of the country's elections.

The political situation is currently dominated by the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016, as well as the finalization of its specific arrangements. At this stage, two points of divergence remain in implementing the agreement. They are related to the procedures for presenting candidates to be appointed to the post of Prime Minister and to replace the president of the national council for the monitoring of the agreement. The specific arrangements govern the appointment of the Prime Minister; the setting up of the Government; the implementation of the national council for the monitoring of the agreement; the timetable for implementing the agreement; the revitalization of the Independent National Electoral Commission and the renewal of the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel et de la communication.

With regard to the appointment of the Prime Minister, the Rassemblement is asked to present a list of the names of at least three candidates for that post, from among which the Head of State will appoint one, in accordance with article 78 of the Constitution. The President of the national council for the monitoring of the agreement was appointed by consensus and its new President should be appointed in the same manner. Given that the President of the national council for the monitoring of the agreement should be a member of the opposition, the Government asks the opposition, and in particular the Rassemblement, to resolve its dissension and agree on a candidate to replace the Etienne Tshisekedi. The Government would like to reassure the Council that it is in no way delaying the implementation of the agreement. The delay in the process is due to extraneous circumstances, in particular the death of Mr. Tshisekedi, which forced the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo to suspend its work. We believe that, with the resumption of negotiations on 16 March, the parties will find a way to reach agreement on those points of divergence.

Turning now to issue of elections, in his end-of-year speech to the nation on 31 December 2016, the President stated that he was determined to continue the process of organizing elections. In that regard, the Government is working to marshal the resources necessary to meet the needs of the Independent National Electoral Commission. Operations to revise the election calendar that began in July 2016 are ongoing throughout the country's various provinces. It should be noted that of the 25 provinces, in addition to the city of Kinshasa, work has already been carried out in 13 of them. The Independent National Electoral Commission has already started to provide election materials in the 13 remaining provinces. To date, nearly 20 million voters have already been registered, of the 41 million who are expected to be registered throughout the entire country. It goes without saying that the significant results achieved thus far by the Independent National Electoral Commission are essentially due to the efforts of the Government, which covers the various costs of operations on its own.

With regard to support from our partners, it should be pointed out that of the $123 million in multipartner funds earmarked for the Projet d'appui au cycle électoral au Congo, only 6 per cent of the total has been funded.

In addition, according to the information we have, that minimal funding is granted to non-governmental organizations and churches. On 31 July, the Independent National Electoral Commission intends to conclude all stages and address all technical demands related to the complete revamping of the electoral registry, which is the precondition for the holding of elections. As the Independent National Electoral Commission mentioned in its report submitted to the groups of experts of the Fifth Committee on the occasion of its mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in February — a copy of which was also submitted to the Council — MONUSCO support faces some challenges, which disrupts the schedule and causes delays in the provision of election materials. To give one example, in a province north of Bangui, of the 20 rotations planned, MONUSCO has organized only two flights and another private aircraft flight carrying three tons, thereby delaying operations by several days.

The Government is committed to sparing no effort to allow the Independent National Electoral Commission, along with support from the entire Congolese political class, to set the stage for a peaceful, credible and transparent electoral process. It therefore calls on the international community as well as all partners to effectively engage in the mobilization of resources to promote elections in my country by removing all preconditions.

In the area of security, I believe that it is useful to point out that the 148 territories that make up the administrative subdivisions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are under the authority of the Congolese State, which was not the case a few years ago. That positive development should therefore be noted despite occasional hotspots marked by tension.

The report under consideration highlights the worrying situation dominating the east of my country with the continued presence of the Allied Democratic Forces, the Lord's Resistance Army and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), as well as several national armed groups. With regard to that issue, I must reassure the Security Council that our armed forces, who have made great sacrifices in combating the negative forces, remain determined to persevere in their noble mission until those criminals are completely eliminated so that our people can live sustainably in peace and contribute to the development of their country.

To achieve that goal, our armed forces will continue to cooperate with MONUSCO. Given the mixed results achieved through that cooperation, however, my Government believes that an assessment must be made to objectively identify gaps in the implementation of commitments so as to enable us to achieve improved operational efficiency of the forces. It is unacceptable that the United Nations largest peacekeeping mission in the world, which has been in my country for approximately 20 years, is unable, with the means at its disposal, to end a crisis situation that has persisted for several years.

In that regard, the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate, which we support, must take into account the expectations of the Congolese people, whose most ardent wish is to see the negative forces and the various armed groups that are teeming in the eastern part of the country be completely eradicated. To achieve that end, it is imperative to strengthen the operational effectiveness of the United Nations forces, in particular the force Intervention Brigade, so that it can carry out the mission for which it was established — a mission that it carried out so well at the beginning of its mandate. Strengthening effectiveness must be accompanied by: first, the addition, if necessary, of a second Intervention Brigade unit; providing adequate means and equipment to effectively combat the asymmetric threats encountered on the ground; and better cooperation and information-sharing with the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), especially with regard to information gathered by drones.

In March 2016, my Government informed the Council (see S/PV.7654) of the situation concerning the former rebels of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) when it noted the disappearance of many of them from the Bihanga military camp in Uganda in which they were cantoned. As the Council will note, those former rebels, who, in line with the Nairobi Declaration, had committed to never again resorting to weapons as a means of negotiation and to become a political party, have largely shown their bad faith through deliberately violating their commitments. Members of the Council will recall that, in accordance with the Nairobi Declaration, the President of the Republic pushed through a vote on an amnesty law so as to facilitate the return of those former combatants. Among the former combatants eligible for repatriation pursuant to that law, only a small number has agreed to be repatriated from Uganda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Despite all the steps that the Government has taken to convince those who remained to return to the country, no satisfactory results have been reached.

In the same vein, the ultimatum of 15 December 2015 of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) for the unconditional repatriation of all Congolese and non-Congolese members of the M-23 who took refuge in Uganda was rejected by the leadership of the M-23, which has taken those former rebels hostage. My Government condemns the military activities of the former rebels and calls on the Council to consider sanctions against them in accordance with the decision taken in New York on 29 September 2015 by the Heads of States signatories to the framework agreement at the sixth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. Moreover, my country deplores the duplicity and lack of frank cooperation on the part of certain neighbouring countries in resolving the issue. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is therefore asking the Council to call upon them to respect the commitments to which they freely subscribed under the framework agreement, convert them into actions and find political solutions to the obstacles preventing the repatriation of the former rebels.

With regard to the presence of fighters from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army within the opposition in our country, without rehashing the details of that issue, it is important to stress that the letters addressed to MONUSCO on 1 October 2016 and to the Council on 9 January respectively reflect my Government's position clearly. As specified in those two letters, my country calls on the United Nations to take the necessary steps to evacuate those combatants from our territory so as to spare us from reliving a situation similar to the one that we went through with the FDLR.

With regard to the latter negative force, I believe that it is important to remind the Council of the 340 FDLR combatants who voluntarily surrendered two years ago, as well as their dependents, who remain even today cantoned in transit camps in Kanyobagonga, North Kivu, Walungu, South Kivu and Kisangani in the province of Tshopo. Although we appreciate the treatment of those former combatants by MONUSCO, my Government renews its appeal, before the Council, to the international community for their repatriation to their country of origin or their resettlement to a third country other than those of the Great Lakes region. My Government is unable to comprehend the fact that the international community, which has always insisted on the eradication of that negative force, has so far not received a favourable response to that appeal, which could serve as an act of encouragement to convince those among them who have not yet laid down their weapons.

I should like to bring up the situation of the two members of the United Nations Panel of Experts whom we have lost track of and who have gone missing in Kasai. My Government deplores that disturbing disappearance and is committed to making every effort to find out more. At present, my country's security forces are actively carrying out investigations in cooperation with MONUSCO to locate them.

It would be remiss of me to conclude without saying a word about the situation concerning the tensions that have been felt in certain parts of the country. With regard to the members of the Kamuina Nsapu militia, an agreement was reached with family members of the Customary Chief of that group. Following that agreement, on 19 March 2017, the members of the militia agreed in Kananga to lay down their weapons. In Tanganyika, the Government's efforts have led to an amicable settlement of the conflict between the Luba and the ethnic Twa, or pygmy, communities. In Kongo Central and Kinshasa, calm has returned among the followers of Bundu dia Kongo with the arrest of Ne Muanda Nsemi.

With regard to the issue of the strategic dialogue, it should be recalled that that meeting was held from 9 to 19 March 2016 in Kinshasa between the Government and MONUSCO and yielded the following agreements that were signed onto by both parties. In all areas concerned, including North and South Kivu, reduction of the force is justified. In other areas such as the provinces of Tshopo, Tanganyika and Haut-Uélé, the presence of the force is not justified with the exception of the civilian protection unit. Concerning the majority of the residual security challenges, the MONUSCO force, with the exception of the Brigade Intervention, is no longer the answer. Almost all the actions to be undertaken are ultimately and essentially the responsibility of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government therefore calls on the Security Council to formally recognize the conclusions of the Joint Working Group signed by both parties and recall the need to organize the second phase of the strategic dialogue so as to set the timetable for the orderly and definitive withdrawal of MONUSCO from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With regard to the actual reduction of the force, the Democratic Republic of the Congo calls for an assessment to be conducted with the Government and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with the participation of the partners in the region, including the Southern African Development Community and the ICGLR, to reconcile the requirements of the reduction of the force with the imperatives of robustness and effectiveness.

With regard to the issue of human rights, the situation concerning fundamental freedoms in the Democratic Republic in no way feeds into a deliberate policy of violations of human rights. Accordingly, that falls within the scope of individual responsibilities, the derogation of which in all cases cannot go unpunished. In that regard, ad hoc bodies have the task of complementing the Government in improving the promotion and protection of human rights in a constructive partnership, and not in a useless confrontational struggle. The presence of the Joint United Nations Office on Human Rights attests to the fact that my country has accepted that that structure can represent the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights within its territory and that the Government is cooperating with it to the best of its ability.

However, the credibility of the reports produced by that entity poses a problem, as often they are not supported by evidence. I would like to recall that the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains among the countries that cooperate with the international community in the promotion of human rights. In July and August 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo and clearly recognized at the end of the mission that significant progress had been made by the Government in this area.

In order to avoid the sad experience of the events of 19 and 20 September 2016, as a result of excesses of some opposition supporters who attacked people and property, public political demonstrations were temporarily suspended on an exceptional basis. With regard to freedom of public protest, the Constitution and the law on public protest establish only an intelligence system in order allow the administrative authorities to supervise demonstrators in accordance with the indicated itinerary and schedule. Nonetheless, public authorities remain primarily responsible for public order and security. In this respect, they may take the protective measures necessary in a democratic society to safeguard public order and avoid irreparable damage.

The material damage resulting from the events in Kinshasa on 19 and 20 September 2016 has been well documented by the Ministry of the Interior. The Prosecutor General opened investigations in order to identify and punish perpetrators. Of the 172 alleged perpetrators brought before the competent courts, 73 have been acquitted, 83 were sentenced to between 1 month and 20 years of prison, and about 20 minors were brought before juvenile courts. Public disorder accompanied by serious violations of citizens' rights, which was recently orchestrated by the followers of the Bundu dia Kongo movements, in the Kongo Central and Kamwena Nsapu in Kasai, are to be condemned. With regard to this last point, a video disseminated on social networks was the subject of investigations carried out by a team of senior magistrates of the Prosecutor's Office.

At this stage of the investigation, the Military Prosecutor announced, at a press conference on Saturday, 18 March in Kinshasa, that seven suspects, all elements of the FARDC, including two majors serving as Commander and Deputy Commander of Operations, were arrested. The operations and field investigations resulted in the arrest of the alleged suspects for the following offenses: war crimes by murder, war crimes by maiming, war crimes by cruel and inhuman and degrading treatment, and refusal to report crimes committed by persons subject to military jurisdiction.

Similarly, concerning the malicious destruction in February 2017 of the Catholic Church property in both Kinshasa and Lubumbashi, the court has been tireless in its efforts to identify and punish the perpetrators.

In terms of sexual violence, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now on the path to consolidating the progress made in its policy to combat this scourge in all its forms. Since 2013, the Secretary-General's preliminary report on conflict-related violence reveals a decline in cases of sexual violence in my country. This noticeable decline is the result of systematic work to combat impunity carried out by the judiciary in general and, specifically, by the military judiciary.

In the light of those considerations, my Government believes it is now necessary for a far-reaching dialogue with the United Nations to remove the Democratic Republic of the Congo from the list of countries with high levels of rape. Along the same lines, the Government has been active in the fight against child recruitment in our armed forces. These efforts were reflected in an audit carried out in 2015 by an independent Swedish firm — MO Consulting — in collaboration with UNICEF, which confirmed the absence of children in our armed forces. In view of those results, my Government also requests the Democratic Republic of the Congo to be removed from the list of countries whose armies recruit and use children.

With regard to the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, resettlement and repatriation programme, a budget of $85 million had been agreed to fund the various activities of the programme over four years by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its partners. In accordance with that budget, the Democratic Republic of the Congo committed $10 million, MONUSCO committed $8 million and the World Bank and other partners are to provide $67 million. Besides my country and MONUSCO, which have disbursed their share, only the World Bank and Sweden have pledged and disbursed $21.5 million. A significant gap of about $50 million remains unfunded.

Despite this situation, of the 12,205 ex-combatants from the different armed groups active in the east of the country, to date 4,812 have been reintegrated and demobilized, 3,763 have been demobilized and returned to their respective communities for reintegration after completing a vocational training programme, 529 ex-combatants of M-23 have been demobilized and returned to their communities, and 25 foreign combatants were handed over to MONUSCO for repatriation to their countries of origin.

The wish of the Congolese people and that of my Government is that the next extension of the MONUSCO mandate brings us peace once and for all by putting an end to the daily tragedy that the people of in the eastern part of my country have been experiencing for many years.

In conclusion, I wish to express my Government's thanks to Mr. Maman Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa, for their commitment and dedication to the cause of my country and to the Great Lakes region.

The President: I would like to thank warmly all of our briefers, in particular Monseigneur Utembi and Ms. Kalala for travelling to New York to brief the Security Council. Their briefings have provided us with an invaluable insight at an important moment for their country.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7904

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7904th meeting

Thursday, 23 March 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Johnson	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Zemene
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Ms. Wallström
	Ukraine	Mr. Prystaiko
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Note by the President of the Security Council (S/2017/150)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of the victims of the terrorist attack in London

The President: On behalf of the members of the Security Council, I would like to condemn in the strongest terms the cowardly terrorist attack that took place in London on 22 March and resulted in the death or serious injury of many innocent people. I would also like to express my sincere condolences to the families of the victims.

I now invite Council members to rise to observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of the victims of yesterday's attack and all other victims of terrorism throughout the world.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Note by the President of the Security Council (S/2017/150)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/236, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America. I also wish draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/150, which contains a note from the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2345 (2017).

The meeting rose at 10.10 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7905

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7905th meeting

Thursday, 23 March 2017, 10.10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Johnson/Mr. Rycroft	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Zemene
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Amendola
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Ali
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Baba Cissé
	Sweden	Ms. Wallström
	Ukraine	Mr. Prystaiko
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

The President: I want to warmly welcome the Ministers and other representatives to the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Somalia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Nairobi.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia; and Mr. Francisco Caetano José Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Madeira, who is joining the meeting via video-teleconference from Mogadishu.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/226, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2346 (2017).

I now give the floor to Mr. Keating.

Mr. Keating: As the Secretary-General said on his first field visit since he took office, Somalia is experiencing a moment of both tragedy and hope. Tragedy, because a drought-induced humanitarian crisis is now engulfing the country, with the imminent risk of famine. Hope, because the recent electoral process has created the momentum for fresh political engagement among Somalis. The announcement 48 hours ago of the establishment of the Cabinet, which includes six women, is another important step forward.

More than 6 million Somalis — half the total population — are now in need of assistance. Nearly 3 million, mainly women and children, require immediate lifesaving support, and they include growing numbers of displaced people living in miserable conditions. Somalis, including politicians, business people, civil society and members of the diaspora, are taking responsibility for drought response. That distinguishes Somalia from other countries facing humanitarian catastrophe. President Farmajo declared a national disaster within days of taking office. He is using all available platforms to mobilize national and international support. Access remains a challenge, including in areas controlled by Al-Shabaab. But compared to 2011, when 260,000 people died, the scope for responding to the crisis is greater. Cell-phone coverage and money-transfer options have expanded; data on needs and assessment has improved; controls on resources and partner-vetting are stronger; and operational capacities have grown.

Humanitarian partners are scaling up the response in various ways, including through the private sector and with cash programming in affected areas. More people are now being reached with food aid, nutritional support, health-care services and access to safe water. But much more is needed. The most urgent challenges include funding for immediate lifesaving action, in particular for the cholera response, which has now affected 11 of Somalia's 18 regions. Treatment centres and units are being opened throughout the country, but the disease continues to spread. A rapid expansion of treatment and preventive measures is urgently needed before the rains, which will only exacerbate the problem further.

The famine-prevention operational plan is seeking $825 million in order to reach 5.5 million people by June. The plan is currently 32 per cent funded. Funding and cash-flow constraints prevented a significant increase in response activities at the beginning of the year, and more resources will be needed by the end of March if we are to enable the partners to reach those affected before it is too late. I welcome the recent generous contributions made by many countries in response to the calls from the Somali Government and the United Nations for assistance, including a very generous one from your Government, Mr. President.

Had the electoral process not delivered a result accepted as legitimate, drought-response efforts would be much more difficult. Instead, the electoral process has created a sense of hope. The new Parliament is more diverse, and its membership is younger and includes more women than any before it. The elections were largely peaceful and were not derailed by Al-Shabaab. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somali security and intelligence forces did a great job of protecting electoral sites. The presidential election was conducted transparently. The former President, Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, deserves credit for a smooth and peaceful handover.

The elation that greeted President Farmajo on 8 February transcended clan and regional lines. The outcome of the process has generated widespread goodwill. As Prime Minister Dessalegn of Ethiopia said,

> Somalis have made history and set a great example to countries ... emerging from conflict".

The complexity and imperfections of the electoral process have not diminished the expectation that there must be one-person, one-vote elections in 2020. Preparations must now begin to establish the necessary legal and administrative framework, lay the groundwork for inclusive elections and enable women to compete on equal terms with men. To that end, the United Nations will field a needs-assessment mission this week.

The new Government and Parliament now have an opportunity to use the goodwill to reboot efforts to build a functional and inclusive Federal State and to tackle the socioeconomic, structural and political issues that make millions of Somali women, men and children so vulnerable. For a functional and truly sovereign Federal Somalia must find ways to rely less on foreign funds and more on its own resources. Unless Somalia can start attracting serious investment and generate domestic revenues, State-building will remain only an aspiration, and the country will remain perilously dependent and vulnerable to weather-related shocks. That will require not only greater institutional capacity but also a settlement between the Government and the private sector. Taxes should be collected by the State, in return for assurances that funds will be accounted for and used to provide basic services, including security and the rule of law.

The President and Prime Minister have committed to making improvements in public financial management, transparency and accountability, including vigorous steps to fight corruption, which they see as drivers of insecurity. Those tasks will not be easy. They deserve our support, including incentives for the private sector. Support is needed to clear Somalia's arrears and allow it to move along a path towards debt relief.

A more immediate challenge is to eliminate the scourge of terrorism. The cost is just too high, both in terms of human life and lost opportunities for Somalia, but also for its neighbours and the international community, including countries that are serving on the Council. Success in degrading and dismantling Al-Shabaab requires a multi-pronged approach, embedded in a political strategy led by the Somali Government. That approach will need to embrace support for AMISOM's operations, Somalian security-sector reform, a resolution of local conflicts, the stabilization and expansion of State authority in liberated areas, and it should address the deficits in governance and the rule of law that give Al-Shabaab oxygen.

Somalis want to assume greater responsibility for their own security. There is some way to go. The Somali security forces are underresourced, irregularly paid, fragmented, often privatized and largely unaccountable. But building trusted security forces that are acceptable to all Somalis is essential. It represents a major opportunity to build and consolidate the federal State and should be approached as such, not just as a military undertaking. The essential first step is a political agreement between the Federal Government and Federal member states, supported by Parliament and civil society, on a shared security architecture that embraces both army and police.

Such an agreement can become a basis for more coherent international support and a cornerstone for joint planning with the African Union (AU) on AMISOM's future and eventual drawdown. AMISOM is a model for a comprehensive approach to security, but it has reached its tenth anniversary and will not stay forever. The troop-contributing countries have their own parameters, and donors face many competing global demands. However, as was evident during the electoral process, for now AMISOM remains the backbone of security in Somalia. Its presence is essential to building the Somali security forces, and its precipitate drawdown could be disastrous.

For that reason, I urge the Council to focus on finding the funds to maintain AMISOM's presence and enable a conditions-based withdrawal. The objective must be a sufficient level of security in the coming years, including in the run-up to the elections in 2020. Over the next month, the AU and the United Nations will jointly review AMISOM's future. Along with the results of the strategic assessment mission, the review should help the Council decide on the way forward for AMISOM, including the use of assessed contributions. However, the results of the review are unlikely to be ready by 15 April, owing to delays in the establishment of the new Government.

Security is not the only priority. Advancing the constitutional process remains urgent. Constitutional development will require consensus-building, dialogue and consultations at various levels in order to address all issues related to federalism. Strengthening conflict-resolution capacities is another. It is vital to include all sectors of society, including women, young people, minorities and businesses, in the peaceful resolution of internal conflicts. The United Nations will work on that in coordination with key international partners such as the African Union, the European Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

Significant work is needed to improve the dismal human rights situation in Somalia. I am particularly concerned about attacks on journalists and the increase in sexual violence against internally displaced women and members of minority clans. Military operations and a worsening humanitarian situation will expose Somalis to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Improving the capacity to provide protection must be a priority. Full implementation of the human rights due diligence policy, including the implementation of mitigating measures, is essential.

In conclusion, Somalia faces many daunting difficulties after decades of violent conflict, but it has now been presented with a political opportunity. The Security Council enjoys a remarkable degree of consensus on Somalia. I hope that it can be used not only to address the immediate crisis facing millions of people but also to support Somalia's new leadership, President and Prime Minister in addressing the underlying issues so that we can prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again.

The President: I thank Mr. Keating for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Madeira.

Mr. Madeira: I am honoured to have this opportunity to address the Security Council on the situation in Somalia.

It has been 10 years this month since the first soldiers of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) landed in Mogadishu on 6 March 2007, under fire from Al-Shabaab's Kalashnikov guns and mortars. In order to mark that important event, show solidarity and congratulate the people of Somalia and President Farmajo on his outstanding election, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission — who has asked me to greet those in this Chamber on his behalf and present his excuses for being unable to join the Council today — felt it was important and appropriate that he begin his activities outside the African Union headquarters with a visit to Somalia, his very first to a member State of the African Union and only four days after he took office, on Tuesday 14 March. He wanted to be close to AMISOM's men and women in the field and the people of the great country of Somalia, to honour our heroes and celebrate 10 years of the sustained effort by AMISOM and the Somali National Army to restore peace and stability in Somalia and in the East African region as a whole.

The Chairperson also felt that it was important to go to Somalia in order to highlight the alarming humanitarian situation that has befallen the country, where 6.2 million people are on the brink of famine, and a catastrophe similar to that of 2011 is looming on the horizon. As in 2011, the African Union, through AMISOM, will once again continue to work hand in hand and in coordination with the Somali authorities and other partners to support our Somali sisters and brothers who are the victims of drought, and to do our best to save them from an impending calamity.

As we look back at where we were in 2007, we realize that we have come a long way. Overall, the situation in Somalia has greatly improved, thanks to the enormous efforts of AMISOM in its joint operations with the Somali national security forces and other partners. In terms of performance, Somalia has defied the odds. The past four years have witnessed intense political activity and reforms, facilitated by a security environment conducive to such action. The Federal Government has remained in place in Mogadishu, functioning and actively formulating policy frameworks, strengthening its institutions, improving its performance and enhancing its efficiency. Regional Governments have been established and are doing the best to perform and respond adequately to the enormous challenges faced by the people under their authority. Economic life is coming alive in many regions of the country, particularly Mogadishu. Political dialogue, reconciliation and State formation, a constitutional review and elections have all been taking place. With the support of AMISOM and the Somali National Army, in September 2012 and February 2017, Somalia succeeded in effecting exemplary peaceful transfers of power. Eighty per cent of the country's territory has now been recovered from Al-Shabaab.

However, a lot more must be done to bring Somalia to the point where it needs to be. The country's capacity to hold on sustainably to its liberated territories, restore its authority, ensure the safety and security of its communities and enable the Administration to perform its governing functions must be further strengthened. AMISOM is playing its part in the concerted effort to build the country's capacity and enhance the effectiveness of Somalia's security forces, especially the National Army, the police force, the intelligence service and other public institutions that are central to the provision of basic services to the people and to keeping them happy and confident.

Somalia is now turning a new page under a new leadership, committed to putting the people of Somalia first. That means better governance, including the delivery of services, accountability, fighting corruption and enhancing the capacity of Somalis themselves to take on, deter, degrade and contain Al-Shabaab terrorists. A firm foundation enabling the country's institutions to take over their constitutional responsibilities is being laid. We are happy that the views of the African Union and those of President Farmajo on how to do that are very similar.

We are satisfied with the current ongoing momentum in the build-up to the London conference on a comprehensive approach to security in Somalia and on streamlining, empowering and consolidating Somalia's governance institutions. However, it is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that the effective achievement of our common objectives with regard to Somalia implies establishing short-, medium- and long-term benchmarks that must be pursued and implemented in a coordinated, complementary and mutually reinforcing manner. Concentrating on the medium- to long-term objectives — without a joint, coordinated and complementary commitment to a concrete, mutually reinforcing and objectively feasible plan to address the immediate challenges to our common effort in the short term — has the potential to undermine and render the implementation of our medium- to long-term plans very difficult.

As the Government strives to contain Al-Shabaab and improve security in a coordinated and complementary manner, we must provide it with the means and requisite support enabling it to concomitantly establish its presence in and effectively govern the territories that it has liberated with our support, and that must happen while we pursue our medium- to long-term goals of building permanent and more reliable and effective State institutions. The fight against Al-Shabaab and the efforts to degrade it must continue, and providing adequate means and conditions for AMISOM and the Somali national security forces to do so more effectively and in acceptable conditions must be one of our common and immediate short-term objectives.

Containing Al-Shabaab today requires, inter alia, that we build barracks to house the Somali National Army soldiers who have already been certified and have been made aware of the United Nations human rights due diligence policy. It requires that they be screened, equipped, rehearsed and motivated, paid salaries and given command so that they can face the enemy more effectively. It requires that both AMISOM and the Somali National Army be given the support that they have requested to dislodge the enemy from its remaining strongholds in the Juba Valley and Somalia's north-eastern coastline. It equally requires that AMISOM be provided with a more predictable, less erratic and more dependable source of funding to perform its duties and achieve its mandate on time. That should include the assessed contribution.

We have a very clear timeline. We have to start drawing down in 2018. We do not have much time left. We need the means to make a significant difference by then. The Secretary-General has been on the ground in Somalia and has seen for himself what needs to be done. The African Union remains committed to fulfilling its part in our common struggle against violent extremism and terrorism and for the restoration of peace and security, which are essential ingredients for economic development and the improvement of the living conditions of the people of Africa and of the world at large.

The President: I thank Mr. Madeira for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

President Farmajo: Before I start my statement, I would like to express my deepest sympathy and condolences to the British people and the British Government following the barbaric terrorist attack in London. We in Somalia are at the forefront of that war. We fully condemn terrorism and will continue to fight it in all its forms.

It is a great honour to address the Security Council on the important matter of Somali's progress and the remaining challenges we face. The Security Council, along with many partner nations of the United Nations, has played and will continue to play a vital role in our national progress alongside our people and Government, both bilaterally and multilaterally. At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General and his delegation, including Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for visiting Somalia to witness and assess the current acute humanitarian challenges we face. I heartily welcome the statement by Mr. Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, and agree that while there are immediate and long-term challenges to overcome, there is also much to be hopeful about as we make tangible and sustainable political progress.

Despite the progress Somalia is making, it is difficult to meet the challenges of drought and the humanitarian crises both in our country and in the region, but we must not simply give way to doom and gloom. We in Somalia strongly believe that socioeconomic and political gain must go hand in hand with good governance to achieve sustainable development for all our people.

As the Council knows, despite the enormous challenges and scepticism, the long and protracted elections have just been concluded peacefully and democratically. On 22 February, I appointed Hassan Ali Khayre as my Prime Minister, and the Federal Parliament endorsed him unanimously. Just two days ago, he in turn formed a competent Cabinet. I am optimistic that Parliament will once again support the new Cabinet so that we can get to work, starting with tackling the drought currently wreaking havoc in our nation. Somalia was one the first democratic countries in Africa, and on 8 March we completed our first successful national election in decades. That election saw the preceding President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, graciously accept the electoral outcome that led to my becoming President, and his speech to all delegates strongly encouraged all Somalis and other stakeholders to work with and support the new Administration under the new President.

For the first time in history, we have an almost 30 per cent representation of women in our Parliament, a substantial improvement from 14 per cent in 2012. Furthermore, the number of young lawmakers has increased, and there is a healthy number of diaspora parliamentarians, which is an excellent indicator that our people living all over the world will have an even greater impact than they have already had through remittances in shaping the direction that Somalia takes going forward. The new Cabinet also reflects a greater proportion of women and youth, who are the bedrock of our society.

Among the many pressing priorities for my Administration, responding effectively to the current humanitarian crisis tops the agenda. Almost half of my people are facing acute food shortages, and about 15 per cent are facing famine. I am truly saddened by that situation, as the Somali people are proud, generous, hard-working and truly resilient. They would be the last people to ask for assistance if they could somehow find a way to survive and transcend their reality. Instead, however, men, women and children walk for miles and hours in search of food and water, and many have fled to urban centres looking for the support that our Government is desperately trying to provide with the assistance of the international community. Many people's livelihoods, especially those in the area of animal husbandry, have perished. We are therefore left collectively to plan a better future together in the aftermath of this humanitarian crisis.

The Somali Government has already sounded the alarm internationally and nationally and is leading a drive to generate funds from the Somali diaspora, the business community and others sources that might provide the urgent lifesaving assistance that the millions of our people affected by drought need. A few weeks ago, I declared the current drought a national disaster, so as to unleash our institutions and enable them to act urgently. The Prime Minister chairs the national drought committee, which has successfully mobilized and organized Somalis in the country and in the diaspora to collect funds in support of their brothers and sisters affected by the devastating drought.

The response from the Somali people and the international community has been tremendous, and we are working with the humanitarian community and valuable partners to address the issue. We kindly ask all those who can to give further support to this effort. Their support and generosity will be noted not just by the Somali people but by history.

Given the regional nature of the drought, it is important that sustainable, region-wide and resilient early-warning and intervention strategies be created and, where they already exist, enhanced. We must ensure that we increase the resilience of communities and make a priority of developing sustainable solutions for environmentally induced disasters such as this drought. In that regard, we have now created a new Government Ministry that focuses exclusively on humanitarian response and disaster management. In our national development plan, we have an entire chapter dedicated to resilience and a long-term strategy to mitigate cyclical droughts. In the desperate fight to avert this and other droughts, it is crucial that neighbours share ideas and experience bilaterally and multilaterally through the United Nations and regional institutions such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. This is the only way that can we hope to mitigate the devastating damage caused by droughts in East Africa.

The humanitarian response to the drought is somewhat challenging in certain places because of the insecurity caused by the terrorist group Al-Shabaab. However, we are determined to defeat it. I can confidently say that Al-Shabaab, thanks to the courage and sacrifice of the troops of the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), has been substantially weakened. In the fight against Al-Shabaab and international terrorism, we are grateful for the continuous support of AMISOM troop-contributing countries, our valued international partners, including many members of the Security Council, and the Somali Security Service, which is growing in strengthen and ability every day.

While we are grateful for all the support from and sacrifices by AMISOM, we understand that the only way to protect our democracy and development against evil spoilers is to rebuild our national army, police and other security services. I can assure the Security Council today that that is our goal, and we will achieve it with the Council's continued support. We are working with our partners to develop a clear road map for the reduction of AMISOM forces, while we are also expanding both the quality and quantity of our security services. In that regard, I would like to ask the Security Council to work with us on a road map towards the full lifting of the arms embargo. The road map will be presented at the upcoming London conference in May.

Achieving sustainable peace requires more than physical security. We must invest in education, jobs and skills in order to overcome the many challenges Somalia faces. That critical component of development must accompany the physical security we seek, or it will be difficult to overcome the challenges of radicalization, illegal migration and other tragedies that waste talents and lives. Furthermore, we need to train and educate the future water, engineering, livestock, agriculture and technological champions who will design, produce and maintain the drought-resilience systems that are necessary for ensuring that today's misery is never again repeated. I am sure that all Council members will agree that that is a better investment of our money than repeatedly responding to cyclical humanitarian crises.

Our strategy for a sustainable economic recovery is detailed in the national development plan. We will present our top priorities at the London conference, but I can point to a few key ones today. First, we need to invest seriously in our vital infrastructure, starting with energy, water and major roads. Secondly, we need to revive key economic engines such agriculture, livestock and fisheries. Thirdly, we need to invest in new sectors, such as telecommunications and finance. Finally, none of the foregoing will be possible if we do not first undo our errors and normalize our relations with international financial institutions. Tangible progress has already been made in that regard, but we hope for an accelerated process of debt relief and, subsequently, access to capital loans. A detailed plan covering those issues will be presented in London.

On the political front, we have major work ahead of us. A primary objective for us will be to deepen the federal architecture by strengthening the federal member states and finalizing the status of the capital, Mogadishu. Furthermore, we will finalize the review of our Constitution, which is the document that will bind the Somali people together. We have a large number of negotiations ahead, in such key areas as resource-sharing, the relationship between the Federal Government and the federal member states, security architecture and policy, and many other issues. We will approach them with an eye to reconciliation and social healing. Most importantly, we will work towards the implementation of a one-person, one-vote arrangement in 2020, anchored in a political party system. That is the only way to make our political system more transparent and truly democratic.

Despite the many challenges, none is insurmountable. The Somalis are resilient, patient and ready to do the heavy lifting for their own progress. However, we have a saying in Somalia that one finger cannot be the boss of your whole face. We therefore want to reiterate to the Security Council how much we value the effort of all our partners, and to emphasize that in this time of both our greatest need and greatest opportunity, we must cooperate in order to achieve our common goals and ensure that Somalia, the region and the rest of the world are safe, progressive and prosperous.

The President: I thank President Farmajo for his statement.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom.

I am grateful to President Farmajo for his first address to the Security Council, and to Mr. Keating and Mr. Madeira for their briefings.

Last week I was fortunate enough to visit Somalia at a time that the Secretary-General has described as both tragic and hopeful. Today President Farmajo had an opportunity to describe how the Federal Government plans to bring peace and stability to his country. I hope the President will take the clear message from this meeting that as long as he works for the benefit of Somalia, the Security Council will stand with him.

We meet at a moment when Somalia faces the daunting prospect of its third famine in 25 years. We cannot forget that the last time that Somalia was blighted by starvation in 2011, no fewer than 260,000 people died. Today more than 6 million Somalis need help. The crisis also risks undermining the hard-won political and security progress that has been made. The good news is that if we learn the lessons of 2011 and act promptly and decisively, the famine can still be prevented. Britain has contributed more than $135 million in emergency aid to Somalia this year. That United Kingdom aid will provide more than 1 million people with food, water and emergency health care. I urge all our partners to support the relief effort that is now under way. And I urge the Somali Government to deliver on the commitments it has made to improve access and remove logistical blockages, as part of its welcome focus on the issue.

In Mogadishu last week, I witnessed a military training session for the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troops. A heavy responsibility rests on these brave soldiers to guarantee the security on which every other form of progress depends. This is a critical time for security in Somalia. We must work together to agree on a clear, long-term plan for international security support in Somalia. We hope to make progress on a security pact during the forthcoming London conference on Somalia. The most urgent requirement is for a political agreement between the Federal Government and its federal member states on the security architecture of the Somali security forces. Once that has been agreed on, the international community should outline its comprehensive and coordinated support to Somalia on security-sector reform. We also need to agree on the shape of a conditions-based transition away from AMISOM to the Somali security forces. I cannot commend highly enough the prowess and bravery of AMISOM soldiers and their Somali counterparts in the struggle against Al-Shabaab. They have made a real difference to Somalia and to the security of East Africa as a whole, and we are all conscious of their sacrifice. It is precisely because we must not allow their sacrifice to be in vain that we must ensure a successful transition.

The African Union is a central partner, and the forthcoming joint United Nations-African Union review will be crucial to setting the future direction of that partnership. I hope that all members of the Council will be open-minded, particularly with regard to funding, so that Somalia's progress is not jeopardized by a hasty transition.

Security is one urgent aspect of the broader constitutional settlement that a stable, federal Somalia needs. The Federal Government and member states will also have to agree on how to share power and resources. Resolving those questions will be crucial to the country's long-term stability. I look forward to a one-person, one-vote election in four years' time. I also welcome the focus of President Farmajo on promoting economic recovery and creating jobs for a new generation of young and ambitious Somalis. For that to succeed, the Government will need to continue to make progress on important economic reforms, comply with the current International Monetary Fund programme and improve the business environment. Those steps will also be essential for Somalia to be able to make progress towards its aims of accessing multilateral finance and debt relief.

At this crucial time, Britain will join the United Nations and the Federal Government to host a conference on Somalia in London in May. The conference will assess the response to the humanitarian emergency, accelerate progress on security and adopt a new partnership agreement that sets the terms of the relationship between Somalia and the international community for the coming years. A peaceful and prosperous Somalia is the aim we all share, and let me say to President Farmajo that the Security Council will stand beside him as he strives to achieve that goal.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): First of all, my thoughts are with the British people, and especially with the victims of the horrific attack at Westminster, the heart of British democracy. We are angered by this callous and cowardly attack. However, we are also confident that the legendary resilience and spirit of Londoners will shine through. There can be no surrender to fear. We stand united against the threat of terrorism in all its forms, wherever and by whomever it is committed.

Let me thank you, Mr. President, and the United Kingdom presidency for convening today's meeting, as we embark upon the next step towards a peaceful and prosperous Somalia. I want to congratulate the people of Somalia on their successful completion of parliamentary and presidential elections. I am encouraged by the positive results, especially the increased representation of young people and the fact that the number of women in Parliament has almost doubled. I am equally encouraged by the fact that women make up 23 per cent of the newly appointed Cabinet. That is important for the future.

There is now an opportunity to put renewed energy into the continued peace- and State-building process in Somalia. I would like to briefly highlight three aspects that I believe should be addressed in order to maintain a positive path, with continued support from the international community and the Council.

First, with the process of creating federal member states concluded, the focus should now shift towards clarifying the arrangements between them and the central Government. For that to be fruitful, the constructive relations already established must be further strengthened. The establishment of local governance and the delivery of basic social services to all Somalis must be given priority. Furthermore, the constitutional review should be resumed as soon as possible, as part of resolving outstanding political issues, with a view to being concluded before 2020. Secondly, preparations for the 2020 elections need to start at the earliest possible moment, and a clear road map towards one person, one vote must be developed, incorporating lessons learned from the newly concluded electoral process, as we have already heard.

One priority is making sure that ordinary Somalis benefit from our collective peacebuilding and development efforts. In order for those efforts to be successful, an improvement of the security situation in Somalia is still crucial. I welcome the efforts already made by the Somali Government and its partners in that regard. We should especially commend the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for its vital work. It is critical that we ensure that it has the necessary support, including more predictable and sustainable funding. On that note, I welcome the African Union's plans to strengthen self-financing, not least in the area of peace and security. At the same time, continuing the discussion on access to assessed United Nations contributions is important.

We must also make sure that AMISOM's drawdown is consistent with a corresponding build-up and takeover by Somalia's own security forces. Strong United Nations leadership in Somalia, well-coordinated support and a comprehensive approach to security, as adopted by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, will be necessary. The high-level conference in London in May will hopefully allow us to identify a clear path to sustainable security-sector reform.

Lastly, I want to express my deep concern with regard to the severe situation caused by the drought in Somalia and the region. It is devastating that in 2017 people all over the world are still dying of starvation. The international community, including Sweden, is responding, and there seems to be a strong and united determination to prevent a repeat of the catastrophic famine that took place only six years ago. However, the worst of the drought has likely not yet been reached, and it is crucial that we continue to scale up both funding and delivery. The strong leadership taken by the new Government in addressing the issue will help our joint effort. The regional challenges of the drought, which are exacerbated by refugee flows and ongoing conflict, must also be addressed. I encourage Somalia's neighbours and other countries in the region to further strengthen cross-border and regional cooperation in order to address those complex and interlinked challenges comprehensively.

In conclusion, maintaining a positive trajectory will require hard work by the Somali Government, and we wish the President of Somalia all the best. It will also require dedicated and long-term support from the international community. Sweden remains committed to continuing its strong partnership with Somalia, with the goal of ensuring sustainable peace and development for all Somalis.

Ms. Zemene (Ethiopia): We were indeed shocked by the Westminster terrorist attack in London yesterday, and we would like to offer our condolences to the families of the victims. We also join others in condemning that heinous attack in the strongest terms and expressing our solidarity with the people and the Government of the United Kingdom.

Turning to the business of the Council today, we would like to thank the United Kingdom presidency for organizing this meeting on Somalia. We are very pleased to see you, Mr. President, presiding over this meeting only a few days after your important visit to our region, including Somalia. We were also very happy to hear from His Excellency President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo. We would all like to thank him for his important remarks outlining his Government's vision for a peaceful and stable Somalia. And we are grateful to Mr. Keating and Ambassador Madeira for their respective briefings.

It was two weeks ago that Secretary-General António Guterres undertook his first field visit to show solidarity with the Somali people, who are facing a dire humanitarian situation. His appeal to the international community to scale up assistance to Somalia was quite crucial and very much appreciated. It is in that same spirit that the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki, visited Mogadishu over the past weekend, thereby making Somalia the first country to be visited by the new leader of the African Union Commission. The symbolism is remarkable.

We do indeed need to act swiftly if we are to avert a humanitarian catastrophe in Somalia. We commend President Farmajo, who demonstrated his political leadership immediately after taking office by convening a high-level conference in Mogadishu to mobilize assistance for the humanitarian response. The severe drought is threatening the lives of millions of people in Somalia and the wider region. It is in that context that we would like to reiterate the call made by the Council of Ministers of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which met last week in Addis Ababa, for enhanced support from the international community to complement efforts at the national and regional levels. For our part, we are supporting the United Nations response to the drought situation by allowing UNICEF to purchase supplies from our local markets and by facilitating easy-access corridors for the humanitarian supplies to reach Somalia.

Somalia is facing this humanitarian challenge at a time when it has made significant gains on the political and security fronts. That is why we should do everything possible not to allow the drought situation to undermine those gains. That is also why we should act fast and act now. There is no better indication of the progress in Somalia than the recent election, which, by all measures, and considering the security challenges the country is facing, was the most competitive and participatory that the country has had in a very long time. It is indeed a significant achievement for Somalia and its nascent institutions. The international community, which has invested so much in supporting peace and stability in Somalia, should also draw a measure of satisfaction from that achievement.

It should be stressed that the country has also come a long way in restoring peace and stability in much of its territory. Somalia unquestionably continues to face formidable challenges in the security area, but that should in no way cloud the tangible progress that has been made. Yes, Al-Shabaab cannot yet be dismissed as a mere nuisance, and the series of attacks carried out by that terrorist group recently in Mogadishu and other parts of Somalia are clear indications that it is still capable of causing great damage in terms of the loss of human life and the destruction of property. But one thing is for sure — Al-Shabaab has been significantly weakened, and it no longer controls large swathes of Somali territory.

We welcome the strong commitment made by President Farmajo to defeat Al-Shabaab by working closely with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Provided that there is adequate international support, the total elimination of Al-Shabaab is in fact no longer a remote possibility. AMISOM is marking its tenth anniversary in Somalia this year, and its contribution to laying a foundation for enhanced peace and security in the country has been remarkable. However, AMISOM was never intended to be more than a stopgap measure. Its mission is to provide security support to Somalia in the short term until the security forces of the country are fully ready to take over full responsibility. That cannot be too far away now, and the effort to achieve that goal should be taken up more seriously than ever.

In the meantime and in tandem, ways and means have to be found on the part of the United Nations and the international community to make sure that the support provided to AMISOM is predictable and dependable, so that it can finish the job and pave the way for its gradual drawdown and exit. We very much hope that the Secretary-General will come up with concrete proposals in that regard. Of course, as has already been indicated, the long-term and sustainable solution to the issue is to build the capacity of the Somali National Army, and much remains to be done in that area, including the coordination of international efforts within the context of full country ownership.

Despite its recent positive trajectory, there is no doubt that Somalia continues to faces enormous challenges and difficulties. The country is building its institutions, as well as regional and local administrative structures, more or less from scratch. The recent election has shown us that what we are seeing in Somalia today is more than just a light at the end of the tunnel. There is hope for the country's future. Now is the time, therefore, for scaling up support for Somalia's post-conflict reconstruction and development endeavours. For that reason, the pledges that were made at the Brussels and Istanbul conferences on Somalia should be honoured.

Finally, we welcome the announcement that you made, Sir, together with President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo in Somalia, about the holding of the London conference on Somalia in May. We look forward to participating and hope it will contribute to supporting the long-term stability and reconstruction of Somalia. We in the region will continue to support our sisterly country in overcoming its many challenges. In that context, a special summit of IGAD will be held in Nairobi on Saturday to find a sustainable and durable solution to the plight of Somali refugees. I would like to conclude by expressing the hope that this regional effort will be complemented by support from the international community, including the United Nations.

Mr. Prystaiko (Ukraine): Let me begin by expressing Ukraine's deep and sincere condolences to the families of the victims of yesterday's act of terror. Our prayers go to all Londoners, and we believe that we all have to remain united and dig deep to get to the bottom of the attack and those responsible for it.

I would like to thank you, Sir, for presiding over today's important meeting personally. We appreciate the United Kingdom's leadership in the Council on the issue of Somalia, including by steering the Council's field mission to Mogadishu in May 2016. I am also grateful to the briefers for their insightful updates. And I would like to express our full support for the President of Somalia and his commitment to bringing sustainable peace and prosperity to his country.

Like others, we are heartened to see the significant progress that has been made since 2012 on the political and security fronts in Somalia. The most substantial strides have been in the electoral area. It was a long-distance election marathon with many hurdles along the way. Yet at the finish line we witnessed the most peaceful and inclusive electoral process that Somalia has had in the past several decades. That indicates a clear success. It is truly remarkable that the representation of women in political life has increased by 70 per cent since the previous elections. I am confident that that will have a positive impact not only on the further political empowerment of women, but also on the overall success of peacebuilding endeavours in Somalia.

We understand that elections alone cannot end the instability in the country. Yet they represent a historic milestone on the road to peace and reconciliation for the nation, achieved against a backdrop of continued security challenges, especially terrorist threats. That positive electoral experience should facilitate preparations for the next step — ensuring universal suffrage in Somalia. Further international assistance, in particular through the commendable efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the European Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), remains instrumental.

As the famous eighteenth-century English writer Samuel Johnson once quipped, "the future is purchased by the present". With that in mind, I would like to single out three specific challenges that Somalia is facing today.

First, the dire humanitarian situation unfortunately continues to deteriorate with every passing day. According to recent data from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF, malnutrition and drought-related diseases are on the rise, and cholera has spread to 11 of the country's 18 regions. Drought- and conflict-related displacement also continues to increase. Half of the population is in need of food and humanitarian assistance. Approximately 1.4 million children are at risk of dying imminently from severe malnutrition as famine looms in Somalia and neighbouring countries. Those numbers are more than abstract statistics. They represent the lives of people who must be saved, including women and children. The Council should act decisively and in a unified manner. We should realize that under such circumstances time is not on our side. In that light, we commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and fully support his personal involvement aimed at preventing the repetition of the situation we saw in Somalia in 2011, when hundreds of thousands of people perished.

Now is the time for joint action and for our unified support and assistance to the Government and the people of Somalia. It would be totally unacceptable for the United Nations, or the international community in general, to allow famine to devastate the country once again. We welcome all international efforts aimed at preventing such a scenario. In that context, we commend the United Kingdom's role in those efforts and its readiness to seek new platforms and ways to help Somalia, including the London conference on Somalia to be held in May.

Secondly, with regard to security and counter-terrorism, although the security situation continues to improve, we realize that the threat posed by Al-Shabaab persists. We strongly condemn its terrorist activities, particularly attacks and violence against civilians, the recruitment and use of children, and abductions of and attacks on humanitarian workers. We pay tribute to AMISOM and Somalia's security forces for their efforts to combat that threat. In the context of AMISOM's eventual exit, we encourage the Government of Somalia to accelerate its security-sector reform, in close cooperation with the United Nations presence and international partners. The readiness of local forces for a gradual takeover of security responsibilities from AMISOM, including in the area of the protection of civilians, should remain our top priority. We know very well from our own experience back home that only well-trained and well-equipped national forces can effectively ensure lasting peace and stability in the face of the threat posed by terrorism.

Thirdly, on the political front, besides the importance of ensuring universal suffrage, which I have already mentioned, there can be no doubt that conducting the constitutional review and achieving further agreement on the country's federal administrative system are key tasks for the new Government. Transparency and inclusiveness will play a decisive role in determining its success in that regard and how it will be judged by the international community and, most important, by the Somali people.

Finally, I would like to touch briefly on another factor that must not be overlooked if we are to support Somalia on the path to sustainable peace in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Last week we had reports of the first hijacking of a commercial vessel by pirates since 2012. We hope that incident does not portend a return to the levels of piracy threats that we saw in the Gulf of Aden several years ago. Preventing and countering piracy and armed robbery at sea should continue to be a priority for the Government of Somalia and the international community. Ukraine will stand in solidarity with Somalia as it counters that and other challenges and embraces new, historic opportunities.

Mr. Baba Cissé (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): First, on behalf of Senegal, I would like to firmly condemn the attack that occurred in London yesterday and express the sincere condolences of the Government of Senegal to you, Mr. President, and to the Government of the United Kingdom and to the families of the victims.

I would also like to thank President Farmajo for his important statement, as well as Mr. Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, and Mr. Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia for their briefings.

The delegation of Senegal also wishes to thank the United Kingdom presidency for having taken the initiative of convening this debate on Somalia, where successful presidential elections in February resulted in the election of Mr. Farmajo as new President of the Republic.

That election, combined with the adoption of a new constitution and a transparent, democratic and inclusive electoral code, is undoubtedly a great step forward. On behalf of the Government of Senegal, I once again convey our warm congratulations to the Federal Government of Somalia for the successful political elections, and I encourage regional and international actors to maintain their coordinated and cohesive support so as to consolidate the country's progress.

Our debate is certainly timely, given the current state of affairs, which reflects the seriousness of the other challenges facing Somalia — the most recent being the severe drought, which, according to humanitarian agencies, puts some 3 million people at risk of starvation. That risk is all the more worrying, as the country is still quite exposed to terrorists. Al-Shabaab continues to be a threat as it still occupies parts of the country and engages in harmful actions, such as carrying out asymmetrical attacks, thus greatly undermining the country's security.

I also pay tribute to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali defence and security forces for their ongoing and outstanding work alongside the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia in difficult and often dangerous conditions in their efforts to support this brotherly country in establishing the rule of law.

However, despite the significant progress that the successful holding of presidential elections represents and the progress made in the fight against terrorism, the security and humanitarian challenges remain a source of concern in Somalia, owing to the residual capacities of the Al-Shabaab group, but also to the growing foothold of the Islamic State in the region.

The increase in violence against civilians attributed to Al-Shabaab is compounded by the use of children in clashes, the attacks on humanitarian workers, the embezzlement of aid and hindrances to its delivery, all of which are reprehensible practices that we all strongly condemn, whoever the perpetrators.

In order to better address those challenges, my delegation believes that substantial reform of the security sector is necessary and even urgent. In addition, we encourage Member States to support AMISOM by providing the necessary assistance to the African Union and troop-contributing countries by paying for troops, training, technical assistance and ammunition, consistent with the exemption to the arms embargo imposed on Somalia, as well as by making financial contributions outside of the United Nations trust fund in support of AMISOM.

Confident of the efficiency of regional processes, we also remain convinced that the full cooperation of regional States, particularly Intergovernmental Authority on Development member States, through the regional frameworks and mechanisms established for that purpose, can promote a coordinated, and therefore sustainable, response to the problem of Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups that threaten the region.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, according to statistics cited here by many speakers, including even the President of Somalia, some 6.2 million people in Somalia need humanitarian aid and protection, of which 2.9 million are directly at risk of starvation. We make an impassioned plea for international solidarity to help Somalia cope with that alarming situation. The newly elected Somali authorities must continue to focus on the fight against corruption in many sectors and the improvement of human rights in Somalia, particularly those of women and children. Senegal condemns all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, irrespective of the perpetrators.

In conclusion, my country calls on the international community to continue to support the Somali Federal Government in all of its efforts to advance the political process, eradicate the Al-Shabaab threat, improve the humanitarian situation and promote peacebuilding and sustainable development.

Mr. Amendola (Italy): First of all, as Prime Minister Gentiloni expressed to British Prime Minister May, I would like to reiterate our deep condolences to the British people and its Government over yesterday's terrorist attacks. We reaffirm our commitment to remaining united in our fight against terrorism.

At the outset, allow me to greet President Farmajo and express Italy's congratulations on his election and on the early appointment of the Prime Minister and the new Government, as well as on the strong representation of women within the new Government. We assure him of our strong commitment to supporting the Somali leadership in its efforts to stabilize the country. We are convinced that Somali ownership is the key to that process.

We have always believed in that principle; we reaffirmed that position during the recent election, and we will continue to do so as we further strengthen our bilateral relations and shore up our contribution for building the stable and prosperous Somalia that its President invoked during his statement.

Somali ownership brings me to the first point: institutional framework and security architecture. We are actively involved — along with Somalia, the United Nations, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the European Union and other relevant partners — in supporting the empowerment of Somali institutions. To that end, it is instrumental that Somali national and regional authorities work together to consolidate a united Federal Somalia.

As far as security is concerned, the exit strategy for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) must be gradual in order to enable the entry of the Somali security forces. Besides supporting Somali ownership in the security field through bilateral training for the Somali police and leading the European Union training mission in Somalia with a command of more than half of its soldiers, we continue to encourage the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union, as expressed before, aimed at laying the groundwork for the AMISOM transition.

I turn now to the stabilization of the country. The presence today of President Farmajo and Minister Omer is the best evidence of what has been achieved over the past year. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General used the words "tragedy" and "hope", but Somalia could be and is a success story. After instability and unrest, it is finally heading towards peace. But we should not lose sight of the multifaceted challenges posed by terrorists. Security is not the only concern. The residual capability of Al-Shabaab and the appearance of Da'esh still constitute threats that affect the daily lives of the Somali people. The United Nations and all partners of Somalia can do more to tackle the root causes of radicalization, namely, poverty, the lack of education and the lack of job opportunities.

We hope that the ongoing review of the United Nations presence in the country will carefully assess that issue. We call on international financial institutions to do their part and, jointly with the donor community, to support the Somali Government in improving the business climate.

Finally, with regard to the humanitarian crisis, we are extremely concerned, like other speakers before us, about the severe impact of the drought and the risk of famine. It is a situation that requires immediate action, as the Secretary-General pointed out following his recent visit. We are encouraged by the outcome of the high-level round table convened by President Farmajo in Mogadishu on 28 February and by the prompt measures he has taken to facilitate the delivery of much-needed humanitarian aid. We look forward to further results during the forthcoming Intergovernmental Authority on Development conference on Somali refugees to be held on 25 March.

I am pleased to be able to share with the Council that in answer to its appeal ahead of the London conference, our Foreign Minister, Mr. Alfano, personally informed Secretary-General Guterres a few days ago of an additional humanitarian-aid contribution by Italy, which will provide direct support to the Somali people and the Government as they face this critical humanitarian situation.

I would like to conclude by expressing our solidarity with the people and the Government of Somalia following the death of 40 Somali refugees on a boat off the Yemeni coast. Our thoughts and condolences go to the families of the victims. We follow the plight of Somali refugees with great concern. As that most recent tragic event has sadly reminded us, insecurity and humanitarian challenges are interlinked. It is imperative that we find a common solution to tackling the root causes that have led to the problem of migration in Somalia and elsewhere.

Mr. Ali (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan would like to welcome you, Mr. President, and to join the other members of the Council in condemning the recent terrorist attack outside the Houses of Parliament in London. We express our condolences to the families of the victims and wish the injured a speedy recovery.

We congratulate President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo on his election as Head of State and hope that under his wise stewardship the people of Somalia can achieve tangible results in restoring their country. We express our deep appreciation to the leadership of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Special Representative Keating and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Mr. Madeira, for their comprehensive and thought-provoking updates. We also commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for their commitment to bringing peace and security to the country.

Kazakhstan welcomes the significant political and electoral progress that has been made in Somalia, as well as the improvements in the security situation. The formation of a new Cabinet is an important practical step in tackling the challenges that the country faces. Preliminary measures aimed at building stable State institutions and interministerial coordination should be taken as soon as possible in order to enact legislation and develop national strategies. That will provide a foundation for the rule of law, good governance and security-sector reform. It is essential that the resources be found to pay the salaries of the army regularly with the assistance of the United Nations system, together with that of regional and international organizations and financial institutions. We are looking forward to the upcoming London conference on Somalia, which will prepare a road map for a future federal security structure designed to consolidate the current efforts.

The international community should support Somalia in its efforts to reach the political goal of achieving one-person, one-vote universal elections in 2020. To that end, technical guidance from the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, UNSOM and the Inter-Parliamentary Union will be required in order to establish regional and local electoral structures. The historic momentum towards inclusive democracy, as seen in the increased representation of women in the upper and lower houses of Parliament, must continue. The electoral achievement across the country would not have occurred without the heroic efforts of UNSOM, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and especially the bravery of AMISOM in combating the destructive acts of Al-Shabaab. The training and financial and technical support that AMISOM needs to enable it to succeed in the current asymmetrical conflicts it is facing must therefore be intensified. Kazakhstan is very concerned about the recent Al-Shabaab attacks and calls for closer collaboration between the Government, AMISOM, UNSOM, the United Nations system and other international partners.

As Chair of the Security Council's Committee established pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009), concerning Somalia and Eritrea, Kazakhstan is striving to promote peace and security in the Horn of Africa. We underline the importance of ensuring sufficient financial resources for implementing Somalia's first national development plan. It is evident that the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and regional financial institutions should reinforce the Government's commitment to pursuing the path of sustainable development. Such goals can be achieved, inter alia, by introducing macroeconomic measures, including creating jobs for young people and building the capacity needed to establish and maintain the new and stable public institutions that the country is striving for. Only such national approaches, combined with a comprehensive and holistic regional strategy that addresses the issues of security and development, can ensure lasting peace and stability for the country and the wider subregion.

Like others, we are concerned about the humanitarian situation in Somalia caused by the ongoing drought. Our inability to provide assistance will undermine the pursuit of key State-building and peacebuilding initiatives. While we appreciate the efforts of several countries to host Somali refugees, only a major concerted effort by the international community can mitigate the massive problem of refugees that we are witnessing today. The prevailing tensions and armed conflicts have resulted in death, violence and human rights abuses, especially among children, women and other vulnerable groups. Such acts of violence call for intensifying the mobilization of protection services and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration measures by well-trained experts assigned to UNSOM. Counter-terrorism efforts in Somalia must take into account the rights, special needs and protection of the sectors of the civilian population that are affected by the armed conflict.

Despite the situation, Kazakhstan has hope and optimism for Somalia with respect to its sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, and we would like to express our full support to the newly elected President and his new Government in their vision for Somalia.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China strongly condemns the terrorist attack that took place in London yesterday and would like to offer its condolences to the bereaved families of the innocent victims and our sympathy to the injured. Terrorism is the common enemy of the international community. China is resolutely opposed to all forms of terrorism and is ready to step up its cooperation with the international community in our joint response to terrorist threats and challenges, with the goal of maintaining world peace and security.

China was pleased to welcome Mr. Boris Johnson, Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, as he presided over today's meeting. We also welcome President Farmajo of Somalia, who joined us by video link, and to acknowledge the presence of Foreign Minister Omar of Somalia at today's meeting. China listened attentively to the statements made by President Farmajo; Mr. Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia; an Mr. Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia.

Somalia is entering a crucial stage of national reconstruction. China congratulates President Farmajo on his election and welcomes his appointment of Mr. Hassan Ali Khayre as Prime Minister. We also commend his commitment to advancing the political process of stabilizing the country and pressing ahead with economic reconstruction. We are confident that the Government and the people of Somalia will contininue to make new progress in the reconstruction of their country.

The security and humanitarian situation in Somalia remains precarious, given rampant terrorist activities and the recent grip of a crippling famine. Somalia still has a long way to go in its quest for peace and stability. That is why there is a need for unwavering support and assistance from the international community. China welcomes the Security Council's unanimous adoption this morning of resolution 2346 (2017), on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, which will enable it to carry out the assessment of the post-election situation in Somalia and provide targeted support, based on the Government of Somalia's needs, to enable it to advance its peace process and national reconstruction. Secretary-General Guterres and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Faki, both visited Somalia this month in a testament to the solidarity of the African Union and the United Nations with Somalia as it works to rebuild itself in the new context. China highly commends those efforts.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Over the past decade, AMISOM and countries in the region have assisted the Government of Somalia in actively combating terrorism. The United Nations has provided robust logistics support to AMISOM and has diligently coordinated the international assistance directed to Somalia. Thanks to those efforts, the situation in Somalia has gradually made a turn for the better. That is also an illustration of the positive momentum towards stability and development across the African continent driven by a commitment to unity, self-reliance, peace and development.

Today some parts of Africa are still facing daunting challenges characterized by continued local conflicts, a lack of development capacity and a precarious humanitarian situation. The United Nations has cooperated well with the African Union and other countries of the region on Somalia, providing useful reference points for the Security Council in tackling other hot-spot issues in Africa. China supports Africa in in efforts to address African issues in African ways and is supportive of the leading role played by the AU and other regional and subregional organizations in seeking political solutions to African hotspot issues, enhancing coordination among various parties and building synergies. All the parties should decide on priorities, press the conflicting parties to settle their differences through dialogue and consultation, identify the nature and root causes of given problems, build mutual trust, facilitate reconciliation and pursue lasting solutions.

The international community should nurture a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, support capacity-building in the African Standby Force and the African Union Rapid Reaction Force, and generally improve Africa's collective security capabilities. It is important to take a holistic approach to peace and development, emphasize conflict prevention, draw up clear-cut peacekeeping and peacebuilding targets, and boost Africa's development capabilities so as to promote stability and development in Africa.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to its cooperation with Africa. During the Johannesburg summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, held in December 2015, China's President Xi Jinping and African leaders agreed to upgrade China-Africa relations to a comprehensive, strategic and cooperative partnership. Ten cooperation initiatives for the next three years were launched at the summit, focusing on industrialization, agricultural modernization, infrastructure, finance, green development, trade and investment facilitation, poverty reduction, public health, people-to-people exchanges and peace and security. These outcomes are being implemented in a swift and comprehensive manner.

So far, almost 50 per cent of China's pledged $60 billion has materialized or is in the pipeline. China will continue to act on the principles put forward by President Xi — those of sincerity, practical results, affinity and good faith — and uphold the value of friendship, justice and shared interests. We will ensure good progress in delivering on those initiatives and assist African countries in expediting industrialization and agricultural modernization. We will remain actively engaged in promoting the cause of peace and security in Africa and will further contribute to peace, stability and development in Africa.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay welcomed the presence of the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Boris Johnson, in presiding over our work, and we are grateful to him for organizing today's briefing on the situation in Somalia. As I said yesterday, my Government once again wishes to express its solidarity in connection with the shocking attack that occurred yesterday in the city of London.

I welcome the presence through video-teleconferencing of His Excellency President Farmajo of the Federal Republic of Somalia, and would also like to thank Mr. Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Mr. Francisco Caetano José Madeira, for their briefings.

Uruguay welcomed the establishment of the new Federal Government of Somalia on 8 February following the election of its new President. At the start of this new phase, it is important to decide how the Security Council and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia can best support Somalia on issues relating to State-building, including the revision of the Constitution and the completion of the establishment of the Federal State. That is why Uruguay supported the extension of the UNSOM mandate this morning, in order to give the Council sufficient time to develop an effective mandate that benefits the people of Somalia.

This is a decisive and historic moment on the path towards the consolidation of a democratic, inclusive, stable State with full powers. Somalia has embarked upon preparations for general elections in 2020 based on the principle of one person, one vote. Uruguay acknowledges the efforts made to achieve the 30 per cent threshold of parliamentary seats set aside for women, even though that goal was not reached in this particular instance. However, the result of the elections did show the transformation in the political representation and participation of women in Somalia and, given that important precedent, efforts should be stepped up to achieve that goal in 2020.

Uruguay strongly condemns the continuing threat posed by the terrorist group Al-Shabaab, which is the main threat to peace and security in Somalia. Security-sector reform, and in particular the rapid and effective development of the Somali National Army, is vital if the Government security forces, including police, are to be able to assume a greater responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security and the protection of Somali citizens.

For Uruguay, it is urgent that the international community respond to the worsening humanitarian crisis and famine in Somalia. Unless those problems are addressed, there may be grave consequences that could undermine the recent political achievements. Uruguay would especially like to underscore the need to protect civilian populations, particularly children, women and the elderly, and we encourage the Federal Government of Somalia to broker agreements and achieve stability, especially in areas where access to supplies and humanitarian assistance is essential.

Uruguay reiterates that UNSOM and the international community should work in an increasingly close and coordinated manner with regional administrations and the Federal Government to prioritize capacity-building and institution-building at the regional level, strengthen regional administrations and gradually create the basic conditions needed for governance, security and the provision of basic services for local populations.

Uruguay is very concerned about the recorded increase in human rights violations. Without prejudice to the important commitments that the Somali authorities have made in recent years regarding the protection of children, the detention of children for alleged links to Al-Shabaab remains a matter of concern. Uruguay therefore urges the Government of Somalia to treat children as victims first and foremost, and to ensure that the Government's guiding principles should be the best interests of the child and international standards of protection.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to strongly condemn the terrorist attack in the city of London yesterday. I would also like to express our sincere condolences to the Government of the United Kingdom and the families of the victims.

We are grateful to the delegation of the United Kingdom for holding today's important meeting enabling us to examine the recent developments in the brotherly country of Somalia. We thank Mr. Keating and Mr. Madeira for their valuable briefings. I would also like to congratulate President Farmajo of Somalia on his election last month and to commend Somalia for respecting the choice of the people and effecting a peaceful and democratic transition of power.

It goes without saying that the election of Mr. Farmajo, who had broad popular support and has appointed a new Government, is a positive development that will, we hope, help to continue the development of the political process in Somalia and respond to the aspirations of the Somali people with regard to State institution-building, the elimination of terrorism and the promotion of socioeconomic development. In that regard, we look forward to the report being drafted by the Secretariat in accordance with resolution 2275 (2016) concerning the future presence of the United Nations in Somalia.

My delegation would like to reiterate how important it is for the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) to fully reflect developments on the ground so that it can provide the Somali Government with the appropriate support in confronting the challenges that the country is facing. In doing so, it should focus on the concept of establishing lasting peace, especially in the areas of national reconciliation, the constitutional review, the development of Somali armed forces that are strong and united, and the establishment of effective institutions that can provide basic services and ensure public order and security in liberated areas.

Terrorism still represents a serious threat to the progress achieved in Somalia in the recent past. That threat is not limited to Somalia; it has spread to other States in the region and beyond. We must promote regional and international efforts to defeat Al-Shabaab and other terrorist organizations. In that context, I would like to commend the sacrifices made by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali armed forces. It is a priority for the Somali stakeholders to agree on a plan so as to achieve the goal of building a united Somali army, given the progressive drawdown of AMISOM planned for 2018 before it withdraws fully and its protection and security functions are completely transferred to the Somali State.

We express our solidarity with the Government and the people of Somalia with regard to the effects of the humanitarian crisis caused by the drought and the scarcity of rain. My delegation calls for increased regional and international efforts to provide assistance to those who need it. The consequences of the crisis are numerous and extremely dangerous, particularly for the humanitarian, political and security fronts, and can include problems such as increased migration, pressure on natural resources and ensuing conflict.

In addition, it is important to strengthen efforts to build capacity in Somalia in the area of early warning and prevention mechanisms to manage this type of crisis — which Somalia has suffered from repeatedly in the past — in order to prevent their recurrence and reduce their severity in future.

Lastly, I would like to renew our congratulations to the President, the Government and the people of Somalia on their successful elections, and to reiterate the full support of Egypt for that brotherly country in its efforts to build a stable, strong and prosperous State.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): As others have done before me, I want to express our heartfelt condolences to our close friends in the United Kingdom in connection with the terrorist attack yesterday in London. We pledge our full cooperation and support in responding to the attack and in bringing those responsible to justice.

I thank the President of the Council for the United Kingdom's leadership on Somalia. I am also grateful to Special Representative Keating and Special Representative Madeira for their briefings. We were honoured by President Farmajo's participation today, and look forward to working closely with him and his Cabinet.

There is a difficult job ahead, with formidable humanitarian and security challenges complicating the already daunting tasks of building State institutions and extending services to communities throughout Somalia. Let me assure President Farmajo and the people of Somalia of continued support from the United States.

An immediate challenge facing the people of Somalia is the worsening hunger crisis, of course. More than half of Somalia's population needs food, water and health services now and, as we have just heard today, only 32 per cent of the needed $825 million has been received. We must aggressively pursue all funding streams to meet these urgent needs if we hope to mitigate the possibility of another famine.

We urge the Somali federal and State authorities to do everything possible to remove bureaucratic impediments to the movement of humanitarian assistance and, with the support of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), to establish conditions conducive to the unhindered delivery of critical humanitarian supplies.

We are especially troubled by Al-Shabaab's increasing depravity as it intensifies its asymmetric attacks on civilians, security services and Government officials. We condemn Tuesday's car-bomb attack in Mogadishu's Hamar Weyne district, and we offer our condolences to the families of the victims. We urge AMISOM and the Somali security forces to be proactive in efforts to disrupt Al-Shabaab and to deter other terrorist organizations from gaining a foothold in Somalia.

The United States continues to engage with partners in working towards a suitable solution to the issue of AMISOM troop stipends. The United States provides substantial assistance, including equipment, to the militaries of many AMISOM troop-contributing countries. We encourage donors to contribute to the trust fund for AMISOM and the Somali National Army. We recognize that AMISOM cannot stay in Somalia forever and, in that regard, joint planning between the United Nations and the African Union to identify AMISOM's immediate needs has become increasingly important.

The upcoming joint United Nations-African Union review of AMISOM will be an opportunity to assess Somalia's comprehensive security needs and identify a way forward for AMISOM. Given the severity of the remaining security challenges in Somalia, we do not believe that it is appropriate at this time to transition to a United Nations peacekeeping mission. AMISOM should continue its principal mission — to reduce the threat of Al-Shabaab — while setting the conditions for a successful security transition. To that end, we encourage President Farmajo to work with the Somali regional presidents to reach agreement on a national architecture for the Somali National Army and security forces.

Somalia's international partners must carefully consider how best to provide coordinated support to Somalia's security sector. If we are frank, we must recognize that at times our efforts to train and equip the Somalia National Army have not translated directly into sustainable gains. Security assistance works well when donors coordinate closely behind a Somali-led process, and we have welcomed intensified donor coordination in recent months under the auspices of the "S6" mechanism.

Strong Somali leadership from Villa Somalia and Parliament is needed to begin the constitutional review process that will formalize State formation and provide a legal foundation for Somali institutions. A spirit of reconciliation must undergird those efforts to ensure inclusiveness. It is crucial that the Somali Government also protect its citizenry and prevent the unlawful use and recruitment of child soldiers, sexual and gender-based violence, and the harassment of journalists by security forces.

We look forward to the London conference on Somalia as an opportunity for the Federal Government of Somalia and its international partners to reach agreement on the key issues that we have discussed here today. We hope that we will emerge from the conference with a shared path for the next phase of supporting Somalia's development, while addressing urgent humanitarian needs and building on the recent political and security successes that give us hope that a brighter future is possible for the Somali people.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Before I speak on the issue of Somalia, I wish to express Japan's strong condemnation of the heinous terrorist attack that took place in London yesterday. On behalf of the Japanese Government, I express my sincere condolences to the families of the victims and our solidarity with the people of the United Kingdom. I wish a swift and full recovery to those who were injured.

I thank you, Mr. President, and the United Kingdom, for convening this timely briefing. I thank the briefers for their informative updates on the situation in Somalia. I also extend my deep appreciation to President Farmajo for his robust commitment to achieving peace and stability in the country.

Progress towards peace and stability in Somalia has been unfortunately fragile so far. Many challenges lie ahead, such as formulating a national security framework, building capacity for a representative Somali National Army, combating Al-Shabaab, agreeing on Federal-State resource- and revenue-sharing mechanisms and facilitating universal suffrage in 2020. Robust and sustained international assistance is critical, and Somali ownership is indispensable. Japan praises President Farmajo's active leadership in tackling these problems, and we promise to extend our full support for his endeavours.

The ongoing famine has threatened progress in State-building since the establishment of the Government in 2012. As Secretary-General António Guterres remarked during his visit to Somalia, tackling the risk of famine helps address the root causes of terrorism. Recognizing the very serious famine situation, Japan decided last week to extend an additional $26 million in emergency humanitarian assistance in response to the call by the Secretary-General, with $8.5 million directed to Somalia. This is in addition to Japan's assistance to Somalia in the amount of more than $22 million, decided in January 2017.

Improvement of the security situation in all corners of Somalia is the top priority. The role of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is key in combating extremism, including Al-Shabaab. In order to avoid security gaps as AMISOM draws down next year, reinforcement of the capabilities of the Somali National Army must be conducted in an urgent and coordinated manner. While international donors have mobilized abundant resources over the years, there has been insufficient progress in building a representative and effective Somali National Army. Among the reasons are minimal integration of clan-based militias and a lack of coordination among donor communities.

We welcome the initiative by the United Kingdom to host the London conference on Somalia in May and commend President Farmajo and the Secretary-General for co-hosting the conference. That will be a perfect opportunity to address these problems and use limited international resources in a more coordinated manner. In particular, we hope the meeting will provide momentum for agreement among political leaders from each State on a national security framework, with a clear demarcation of the responsibilities between the Federal Government and states.

Improvements in the country's long-term security also depend on strengthening the capacity of the Somali police forces, including via salary support, institution-building and the provision of basic social services. Japan has contributed more than $400 million since 2007 in these areas and will continue to support Government efforts.

Macroeconomic improvements are critically important for achieving sustained peace and prosperity. Japan has long given priority to this area and welcomes the successful conclusion of the regular consultations by the International Monetary Fund last month. Sustained efforts in implementing measures to improve the fiscal framework, raise tax revenues and conduct structural reforms are key. Japan hopes that the political leaders demonstrate strong leadership and cooperation on resource- and revenue-sharing mechanisms that will serve as a backbone of the Somali economy.

Finally, the first reported hijacking of a large commercial vessel off the coast of Somalia in five years has reminded us of the need for continued international counter-piracy efforts in the region. Japan will continue its warning and surveillance activities and escort operations while also supporting social services and economic development in the coastal regions, in close cooperation, naturally, with the Somali Government and the international community.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before beginning our statement, we would like to add our own words to those of all our colleagues in condemning the heinous attack that took place yesterday in London and also repeat what President Evo Morales Ayma said in conveying our condolences to the Government and the people of the United Kingdom and to the families of those who lost their lives. We wish a speedy recovery to those who were injured. A few minutes ago, I found out that citizens of 11 countries were among the victims of yesterday's attack. That is a terrible reminder of the fact that terrorism is a global threat and that it is crucial for the international community to come together to put an end to it.

I would now like to begin by thanking President Farmajo of Somalia for participating in this meeting of the Security Council. I would also like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Boris Johnson, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, as well as Mr. Michael Keating and Mr. Francisco Caetano José Madeira, whom I thank for their respective briefings.

Bolivia would like to emphasize the importance of the conclusion of the Somali electoral process and the election of President Farmajo on 8 February. We were pleased to see that the elections were much more peaceful and inclusive than has been the case in the past and that they have inspired a sense of hope in Somalia. We believe that they were the most representative and legitimate elections in the country's history and that they have made it possible, for the first time, for 26 per cent of parliamentary seats to be held by women.

We welcome the Secretary-General's position with respect to the importance of international cooperation in consolidating the recent political and security achievements. Moreover, we must also continue to ensure ongoing and long-term support for Somalia in order to promote the process of institution- and capacity-building based on initiatives aimed at good governance and efforts to improve the living conditions of its people. We underscore the importance of adhering to the political road map so that elections based on the principle of one-person-one-vote can be held no later than 2020.

Another issue of concern for us is the deterioration in the humanitarian situation, exacerbated by the drought that has extended beyond Puntland and Somaliland to areas in the south, such as Gedo and Juba Hoose. According to United Nations statistics, 5 million Somalis are facing acute food shortages, of whom more than 1.1 million are in emergency and crisis situations. According to the report (S/2017/21) of the Secretary-General, the continued lack of social safety nets and basic services increases the country's vulnerability and the potential for a broader crisis.

We call on the international community to respond without delay so as to prevent the situation from developing into a general famine in the country and the Horn of Africa, such as we saw in 2011 when, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 250,000 people died, of whom more than half were children under the age of five.

I would like to underscore what the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden said earlier, namely, that it seems unthinkable that in 2017 we are confronting the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. But we also believe that it is crucial to recall that in 2017 we are encountering the greatest concentration of wealth among a few in the history of humankind. Eight individuals possess more than half of the world's wealth, and we naturally believe that that is closely linked not only to the planet's profound humanitarian crisis, but also to climate change, which is one of the causes — not the only one — of the tragic drought situation.

During the Secretary-General's visit to Somalia in March, he stressed to donors the need to provide an additional $825 million so as to be able to deliver critical humanitarian assistance over the next six months, and that, without that aid, the Somali people would face a tragedy that neither they nor any other people deserve. We therefore call on institutions like the World Bank, as part of their international responsibility, to remove all obstacles that might prevent such assistance from reaching Somalia.

Moreover, we commend the President of Djibouti, the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the President of the Republic of Kenya and the President of Somalia for their joint declaration, entitled the Mogadishu Declaration on regional cooperation on the current drought, which commits those States to combining efforts to establish security and stability in Somalia and neighbouring countries, thereby ensuring an effective response to the drought and enabling further progress in peacebuilding and State-building in Somalia.

Furthermore, Bolivia joins in the strong condemnation of the coordinated suicide attacks that killed dozens of Somali civilians and soldiers over the last several days, for which responsibility lies with the terrorist group Al-Shabaab. Similarly, we call attention to the plight of the Somali refugees who are returning to their country and facing situations of insecurity.

Finally, we acknowledge the important work of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the African Union Mission in Somalia. We believe that their contribution is fundamental within a framework of respect for human rights and for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Somalia.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, we would like to express our condolences and sympathy to our United Kingdom colleagues, all the victims and the families of those who were killed in yesterday's terrorist attack in London. We strongly condemn that murderous attack, which once again confirms the need for coordinated action to effectively counter the global terrorist threat. We believe that that tragic event clearly demonstrates the timeliness and necessity of our initiatives to unify the efforts of the international community to combat terrorism.

The successful completion of the electoral process in Somalia and the election of the new President, Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, has been an important milestone in moving the country forward on the path of national reconciliation, re-establishing State authority and consolidating democratic institutions. A Prime Minister has been appointed, a new Government has been formed and the process of establishing a system of territorial administration has practically been completed.

However, we must note that a clan-based approach continues to prevail, unfortunately, in the domestic political life of the country. We need to gradually move away from that tendency and eliminate the fragmented nature of the Somali State at every level. We expect that the new Government will address the issues associated with internal political reforms, socioeconomic revitalization and development. We look forward to the positive outcome of the serious work currently under way on preparing a new version of the country's Constitution and on adopting a law on political parties. At the same time, the most important tasks for the Government continue to be the strengthening of the security sector, solidifying the foundations of federalism and promoting a lasting national and interethnic reconciliation in Somalia.

In our estimation, the security situation remains far from stable. We note the importance of continuing coordinated efforts by the international community to provide multidimensional assistance to Mogadishu so as to enhance the combat readiness of the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia, which bear the primary burden for combating Al-Shabaab. We are concerned about the increase in destabilizing activity by that terrorist group beyond Somalia and the coordination of its actions with other terrorist groups in Africa. However, to date, achieving a decisive turning point in the fight against extremists has been impossible. In that regard, we call for a resolution of the issue of the delays in paying salaries to African peacekeepers and Somali soldiers and officers, who shed their blood to ensure Somalia's safety and security.

The arms and coal embargoes against Somalia are an important and effective instrument in preventing extremist and terrorist forces from resupplying and re-arming. It is those forces that prevent the normalization of the region. The policy of partially lifting the embargo on arms to benefit the security forces of Somalia has proven its effectiveness.

The seriously deteriorating humanitarian situation in several parts of Somalia demands close attention and an appropriate international response. It was caused primarily by a combination of the catastrophic consequences of the drought and the persistent internal instability. Hundreds of thousands of people in the country are on the verge of starvation, and forecasts for the near future are far from encouraging. The international community must provide humanitarian assistance to ensure that the population is provided with drinking water, food and medicine. Russia is actively taking part in developing coordinated steps aimed at resolving the crisis, as well as in providing multidimensional assistance to the authorities in Mogadishu. We will continue training Somali civilian experts in Russia, the funding for which will be provided by the Russian federal budget.

Our country has regularly provided humanitarian assistance to the Federal Government of Somalia and Somali refugees in neighbouring countries through targeted contributions to the relevant funds of the United Nations system. Since 2011, our overall share in providing assistance has exceeded $16 million, including $2 million for Kenya, which has hosted approximately 1 million Somali refugees. We intend to continue to provide similar humanitarian assistance to Somalia.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the various briefers for their presentations and would like to pay special tribute to the British Foreign Minister, who took the initiative to convene today's important meeting and travelled to New York to preside over it. I would also particularly like to thank the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia for his statement via video link.

Once again, on behalf of the Government of France, I would like to express our strongest condemnation of yesterday's terrorist attack in London and convey our deepest sympathy to and full solidarity with the United Kingdom.

I should like to make three points. First, with regard to the political and humanitarian situation in Somalia, the electoral process has been satisfactorily concluded. France welcomes the uncontested election of President Farmajo, which sparked a genuine wave of enthusiasm among the people. We are well aware that the holding of elections called for considerable logistical and security support from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), respectively. And that is indeed an achievement. I warmly congratulate Mr. Keating and the representative of the African Union, as well as my Ethiopian colleague, and, through him, all troop- and police-contributing countries.

The new Somali Administration is already under immense strain. The Secretary-General has just returned from a visit to Somalia and was able to see for himself the seriousness of the humanitarian situation, which, as we know, is being exacerbated by famine affecting the region. The newly formed Government must respond to that situation with the full support of the international community. Above and beyond that emergency situation, it is important for the Somali Government to be resolutely committed to institution-building and the establishment of the genuine rule of law in order to promote improved respect for human rights and lasting stability in the country.

My second point relates to AMISOM and prioritizing the work of the United Nations. Now that elections have been held this year, security will be our primary concern in the years to come. AMISOM has been deployed in Somalia since 2007. Its work, which receives logistical support from the United Nations and financial support from the European Union, is particularly challenging. I would like to pay special tribute to all those who lost their lives in the fight against Al-Shabaab. That fight is a collective endeavour that cannot be won by AMISOM alone. Moreover, it was never intended for AMISOM to be perpetually deployed in Somalia. In that regard, I believe that two points should be underscored.

With regard to the financing of AMISOM, which is not sufficiently predictable or sustainable, France had hoped that other donors would agree to join the European Union in providing considerable financial support. The European Union has already provided some $1.7 billion, in addition to contributions that its member States have made to the budget of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the bilateral contributions of some member States. Regrettably, AMISOM funding is still not geographically diverse. The European Union continues to finance 80 per cent of the total required and hopes that other donors will join in that effort.

With regard to the withdrawal of AMISOM, we understand that some troop-contributing countries are ready and willing to withdraw, and, once again, we pay tribute to them. Nonetheless, it is important that the withdrawal not be dictated only by the schedule of requirements, but that it be linked to developing a security solution for Somalia.

That leads me to my third point, which relates to the ability of the Somalis to be responsible for their own security. That appears to be the key issue on the table for the next reporting period. There are 10,900 soldiers in the Somali army who are eligible for the logistical support provided by the Support Office for joint operations with AMISOM. At the same time, there are local militias, referred to as the Dervish, that also provide security functions.

That raises several questions that could be useful in guiding our discussions. Are the soldiers of the Somali National Army well identified? How might the training and operationalization of the Somali National Army be conducted? Could UNSOM step up its efforts to coordinate training and furnish equipment, with a view to providing a more coherent response to the needs of the Somali National Army? How can existing Somali security forces be more involved in security operations in the country and in Somali National Army offensives? We welcome the holding in May of the London conference, which we hope will provide some answers to those questions, and we look forward to future reports on AMISOM and the presence of the United Nations in Somalia in the new post-election period.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7906

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7906th meeting

Thursday, 23 March 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Johnson/Mr. Rycroft	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Selim
	Ethiopia	Ms. Zemene
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Amendola
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Ali
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Ms. Wallström
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering the period from 16 December 2016 to 1 March 2017) (S/2017/224)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering the period from 16 December 2016 to 1 March 2017) (S/2017/224)

The President: I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, the Ministers and other representatives to the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae, Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and Former President of Botswana; and Ms. Betty Sunday, Coordinator of the Women's Monthly Forum on Peace and Political Processes in South Sudan.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of participants to document S/2017/224, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan covering the period from 16 December 2016 to 1 March 2017.

Following consultations with the members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on their behalf:

> "The Security Council expresses deep alarm at the situation in South Sudan, stresses again that there is no military solution to the conflict, and renews its condemnation of continued fighting across the country. The Security Council reiterates its call upon all parties to immediately adhere to the permanent ceasefire as called for in the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan ("the Agreement"), reminding all parties that implementation of a ceasefire is critical for the success of any genuine, inclusive political process.
>
> "The Security Council is deeply alarmed that famine was declared in parts of South Sudan, that many more South Sudanese face severe food insecurity, and is deeply concerned about the actions of all parties to the conflict that are perpetuating the humanitarian crisis. In this regard, the Security Council condemns any undermining of the ceasefire and restrictions and attacks on humanitarian personnel and their facilities as well as on the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, especially to famine-affected locations, and calls for an immediate cessation of such actions and immediate and unhindered access to all those in need. The Security Council further calls for all parties to take appropriate measures to protect United Nations and foreign premises and personnel and other civilians in South Sudan. The Security Council commends countries in the region who continue to receive and host refugees.
>
> "The Security Council condemns reported human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, as applicable, and expresses deep alarm at the numerous and ongoing reports of sexual and gender-based violence and recruitment and use of children in violation of international law in South Sudan. The Security Council underscores the pressing need for accountability for any violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. The Security Council calls for swift implementation of chapter V of the Agreement, and expects all relevant parties mentioned in the Agreement to take all necessary steps towards the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan. The Security Council also stresses that the Commission of Truth, Reconciliation and Healing, as stipulated in the Agreement, is a critical part of the peacebuilding process in South Sudan.
>
> "The Security Council underscores its conviction that a political solution to the conflict is essential, underscores its support for regional and international efforts to find such a solution in order to advance the Agreement. The Security Council supports the Joint Press Statement by the African Union (AU), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the United Nations of 29 January 2017, which commends the work

performed by the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) Chairperson Festus Mogae, and encourages the AU High Representative for South Sudan Alpha Oumar Konaré to undertake active shuttle diplomacy towards ensuring the implementation of the Agreement and the inclusivity of the National Dialogue in close consultations with the JMEC Chairperson, IGAD, and the United Nations. The Security Council calls on all parties to fully cooperate with Presidents Konaré, Mogae, and the United Nations in their efforts to advance peace in South Sudan.

"The Security Council notes the announcement on 14 December 2016 by President Kiir of the launch of a National Dialogue process. The Security Council notes that an immediate ceasefire by all parties is vital for any National Dialogue to be credible and recalls statements by Presidents Mogae and Konaré, that an inclusive political process must also be authentic, autonomous, and impartially led by a credible facilitator accepted by the people of South Sudan, and which supports the Agreement. The Security Council agrees that an inclusive political process is necessary to improve and maintain the security in the country. The Security Council emphasizes that an inclusive political process would include representatives of all the main parties to the conflict, the full and effective participation of women as well as representatives for a wide range of stakeholders and constituencies.

"The Security Council expresses its deep concern at the failure of the parties to fully adhere to their commitments to implement the Agreement, and in this regard, the Security Council calls for the following steps to be taken:

"1. Immediate adherence to the permanent ceasefire by all forces of the parties to the conflict and all other armed groups.

"2. Urgently address the challenges faced by humanitarian personnel in the delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout South Sudan and specifically to famine-affected areas, including through meetings of the Humanitarian High Level Oversight Committee and urgent implementation of its decisions.

"3. Unconditional support of all parties for the endeavours of the United Nations, AU, and IGAD towards ensuring the implementation of the Agreement and the inclusivity of the National Dialogue as outlined in their 29 January 2017 statement.

"4. Immediate removal of obstacles to UNMISS and the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) operations including obstacles to the deployment of the Regional Protection Force and attacks on UNMISS and CTSAMM personnel.

"5. Immediate cessation of obstructions to and attacks on all national and international humanitarian personnel and facilities endeavouring to provide life-saving assistance throughout South Sudan.

"The Security Council expresses its intention to review progress on the steps outlined above no later than 30 April 2017.

"The Security Council expresses concern that the Government of South Sudan has not upheld all of its commitments towards implementation of the 4 September 2016 Joint Communiqué and renews its invitation to Government to update the Security Council on the Communiqué's implementation.

"The Security Council stresses that actions which threaten the peace, security or stability of South Sudan may be subject to sanctions under resolutions 2206 (2015) and 2290 (2016).

"The Security Council reaffirms its unwavering support for the people of South Sudan."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2017/4.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: I thank you, Mr. President, for your presence here today for this important meeting on South Sudan.

Before we turn to today's agenda, I would like to once again express our sincere condolences to the people and the Government of the United Kingdom on the loss of life and injuries suffered in yesterday's terrorist attack in London. The United Nations stands with the people of the United Kingdom, as we do with all those who have suffered from the menace of terrorism around the world. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families.

The conflict in South Sudan continues to generate profound suffering. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the opposition are conducting military operations in a number of areas, with devastating consequences for civilians, who face seemingly endless violence and are being forced to flee their homes. At present, the situation is especially alarming in the greater Upper Nile area, with military clashes along the banks of the River Nile in and around Malakal, in the famine-affected counties of Unity and in previously stable areas of northern Jonglei. In the past three months, the greater Equatoria region has also continued to see high levels of fighting and insecurity, with retaliatory operations by the SPLA and its allied militias against suspected rebel groups and communities that are perceived to support them.

Civilians continue to be subjected to horrendous attacks, including rape and the recruitment of children. More than 1.9 million people have been displaced internally, more than 220,000 of whom are seeking safety in protection sites of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Some 1.6 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The humanitarian crisis continues to deepen, with 100,000 people enduring famine, 1 million on the verge of that fate and 5.5 million who may be severely food-insecure by the summer. At least 7.5 million people across South Sudan — almost two thirds of the population — need humanitarian assistance. Three years of conflict have eroded livelihoods and disrupted farming, including in the Equatorias, the country's breadbasket. Humanitarian compounds and supplies have been repeatedly looted. The Government continues to impede deliveries of lifesaving assistance, including through denial of access and bureaucratic impediments. Most recently, the Government decided to institute a massive hike in the price of work permits for aid workers.

Yet despite the alarm sounded by the United Nations and the international community over the crisis, the Government has yet to express any meaningful concern or take any tangible steps to address the plight of its people. On the contrary, what we hear most often are denials — a refusal by the leadership to even acknowledge the crisis or fulfil its responsibility to end it. The peace process remains at a standstill. While President Kiir's statements regarding his intention to hold a national dialogue are welcome, they are not convincing in the context of the ongoing hostilities, the absence of consultations with key stakeholders, the systematic curtailment of basic political freedoms, the restrictions on humanitarian access and the growing fragmentation on both sides of the conflict.

Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous returned just yesterday from a trip to South Sudan, where he visited the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and acknowledged the important work that our courageous staff are undertaking in the country. He was accompanied by the Under-Secretary-General-designate for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, who will take up his duties after 1 April. Mr. Ladsous met with President Kiir, the First Vice President and Cabinet Ministers, and emphasized the critical importance of an inclusive political process for ensuring the well-being of the country's people. Indeed, credible dialogue cannot take place at the point of a gun. When civil-society and opposition members cannot meet or speak freely, when a significant proportion of the population cannot participate in discussions and when numerous communities are displaced or facing starvation, dialogue efforts are unlikely to succeed. The same holds true for elections, which can take place only once stability has returned.

The United Nations is working with the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to reinvigorate the political process and to resolve long-standing intercommunal disputes in South Sudan and the subregion. We support both the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, President Festus Mogae, and the African Union High Representative for South Sudan, President Alpha Konaré, in their respective roles. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan and the United Nations country team are supporting intercommunal dialogue and local peace conferences. We also continue to work for the deployment of a regional protection force, despite continuing obstacles imposed by the Government of South Sudan.

But no such force and no amount of diplomacy can substitute for a lack of political will among those who govern the country. There is a strong consensus that South Sudanese leaders need to do more to demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of the country's people, who are among the poorest in the world. If there is to be any hope that those leaders will change their current calculations, greater pressure is needed.

That means, first and foremost, that the region and the Security Council must speak with one voice.

Let us not underestimate the dangers of South Sudan's trajectory. Atrocity crimes have occurred with impunity, and the potential for serious deterioration remains very real. Credible mechanisms for accountability are a must. For every child who dies, for every woman or girl raped with impunity, for every young boy conscripted into fighting and fed only hatred, there is an angry mother, father, sister or brother plunged into sorrow, feeding the cycle of vengeance.

To pull the country back from the abyss and back from a widening famine, we must collectively focus our energies on three immediate objectives. The first is achieving an immediate cessation of hostilities. The second is restoring the peace process, which means ensuring the representation of and consultation with the opposition, civil society and all South Sudanese, regardless of ethnicity, in the transition and in the proposed national dialogue. The third is ensuring unrestricted humanitarian access, including freedom of movement for UNMISS and a future regional protection force.

In two days, the IGAD Heads of State will meet in Nairobi. I urge the members of the Security Council and the leaders of IGAD to unanimously declare their support for those three objectives and to press the South Sudanese parties to implement them. All of the optimism that accompanied the birth of South Sudan has been shattered by internal divisions, rivalries and the irresponsible behaviour of some of its leaders. As a result, a country that saw a brief glimmer of hope for a better future has plunged back into darkness. We have to do everything in our power to change that.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mogae.

Mr. Mogae: I would like to thank the President of the Security Council, the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Boris Johnson, for his kind invitation to brief the Council today. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his accurate and detailed description of the current situation in South Sudan. I do not intend to cover the same ground with what little time we have. Suffice it to say that in the eight months since the outbreak of violence in July, the security, economic and humanitarian situations in South Sudan have steadily deteriorated to unacceptable levels.

The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism now reports deliberate, planned conflict between the main parties to the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Government, and the SPLA in Opposition, which is loyal to Mr. Riek Machar, as well as other emerging armed groups, engage in the destruction of lives and communities in total violation of the ceasefire. Across the board, there is a heightened sense of alarm about the fact that the situation is slipping out of control. It is time for the international community to condemn in the strongest possible terms the violence, the killings, the human rights abuses and the destruction of homes. We must now stand together to do something about it.

Whether by design or default, a war is being waged across South Sudan, and I wish to spell out the three defining questions that we all face right now. How do we stop the fighting? How do we stop innocent people from dying of starvation? And how do we ensure that the interest and consent of all South Sudanese communities are fully represented and considered? Peace, relief and inclusivity — those three issues are wholly interconnected. The humanitarian crisis, now officially a famine, is the direct result of insecurity and of the violence done by all parties to the ceasefire agreement. The insecurity and armed violence are a direct result of the perceived political exclusion from the peace process and of the reality of that exclusion. Only when all the peoples and communities of South Sudan see that their interests and consent are being addressed, therefore, can peace return to the country and the people return to normal life.

There can never be a military solution in South Sudan, nor can a military or political regime be imposed on any side by any other. To find a genuine and durable political solution, the South Sudanese leadership must be willing to listen, accommodate and compromise. In the interim, we must urgently look again at all possible practical measures that we can take to alleviate the desperate suffering that millions of people are facing every day. Women especially have suffered the greatest injustices and won the greatest battle of the conflict. All parties to the peace agreement are failing in their basic duty to protect the South Sudanese people.

The international community must acknowledge that since the events of July 2016, a split in the SPLA in Opposition has resulted in two clear opposition factions: one loyal to Mr. Riek Machar, which is still fighting and has been excluded from all agreements and institutions at the present time, and the other loyal to General Taban Deng Gai and which is cooperating with the Government. I have had important discussions with the President of South Sudan, primarily focused on the national dialogue initiative, and the need for it to be genuinely and sincerely inclusive, not simply a discussion with those who agree with the Government. I reiterate my view that the national dialogue must be authentic, autonomous and impartially led for it to be credible and deliver a reliable representation of all views and concerns. A national dialogue conducted in such a fashion would contribute to the peace process in the spirit of the agreement.

I remain firmly convinced that the peace agreement remains the only viable framework through which to recover the peace process, drive inclusive engagement and re-establish momentum. However hard it may be, I urge all parties, guarantors and partners to continue to support the peace agreement and the implementation of its provisions. With regard to the implementation of the agreement, I can report only modest progress. The National Constitution Amendment Committee started slowly, but is now on course to complete the review of the Constitution before the end of this month. The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism is monitoring and investigating violations of the ceasefire, but is regularly denied freedom of movement by all armed groups. The Joint Military Ceasefire Commission, the Joint Integrated Police and the Strategic Defence and Security Review Board continue to develop their plans very slowly, but to the exclusion of the pro-Machar Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition.

I have called on the Transitional Government of National Unity to demonstrate commitment to the agreement institutions by providing the required resources and facilities and allowing accelerated delivery, and I encourage the regional and international partners to support them.

Beyond the establishment of the technical committee for the national consultative process on the establishment of the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing, there has been no further progress on establishing mechanisms and institutions under chapter V of the peace agreement. I have yet to hear from the African Union Commission on the establishment of the hybrid court for South Sudan. These are matters of great concern. Given the escalation of the conflict, progress towards chapter V mechanisms is needed now more than ever before, and I appeal to all parties to move with haste to enable their swift establishment.

Finally, my recommendation is that we, the international community, must demand peace and the total cessation of violence around the country with one voice. We must activate the immediate deployment of a regional protection force and support the implementation of chapter II transitional security arrangements. We must demand the full and credible inclusion of all parties and stakeholders in the peace process. We must constantly encourage the Government to conduct a genuinely inclusive and impartial dialogue. We must endeavour to achieve an immediate improvement of the conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and ensure a renewed effort to create the hybrid court for South Sudan and thereby establish the mechanism for the prosecution of those who perpetrate atrocities and human rights abuses.

In conclusion, therefore, and in the face of an ever-worsening situation, I believe that only a resolute and unified approach by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union, the United Nations and the international community as a whole can restore hope to the people of South Sudan.

The President: I thank Mr. Mogae for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Sunday.

Ms. Sunday: I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting us, representatives of the civil society of South Sudan, to brief the Security Council on the current situation in our country. It is important for those here to hear directly from civil society in South Sudan, including women's organizations, on the security threat that we are facing and our recommendations for durable peace.

Today, I represent the Women's Monthly Forum, which was founded in 2014. Women from all walks of life come together to push for inclusion in the peace processes and to coordinate our voices with that of the negotiator during the peace negotiations in Addis Ababa. Since then, we have continued to advocate for women's inclusion in the implementation and monitoring of the peace agreement. The security threats for South Sudanese women continue to be extremely dangerous.

We cannot move freely to fetch water or get food owing to the repeated incidents of rape and other human rights violations. That is happening throughout the country, including in the camps for the protection of civilians. Women also continue to face challenges in their efforts to be heard, even in Government institutions.

If the peace agreement were implemented, women could go about their life without fear. Their children could go to school, and they could collect food and tend their gardens. The peace agreement cannot be allowed to die. It is a very important document for the South Sudanese. We have fought hard for it, and now we want it to come to life. It contains provisions that will enable women to play a role in determining the peaceful future of the country. The political will for the implementation of the peace agreement needs to come from all sides within South Sudan, as well as from the international community, including the Security Council. South Sudan cannot do it alone. We, civil society, need solution-oriented meetings, because we have seen numerous meetings that end with the adoption of position papers that are not action-oriented. We urge the Council and the Government to cooperate in seeking a peaceful and lasting solution to the political crisis in our country.

We are here in the meeting today to urge the Council to decide on action on the following key issues. The first is the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The peace agreement offers great opportunities for our political transformation, but the challenge is that the parties to the agreement face issues of political will and good faith, because they focus too much on power-sharing. Secondly, thanks to the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Council is aware of the incidences of sexual and gender-based violence in South Sudan. We urge the Council and the Government to cooperate to actualize the joint communiqué signed by the President and the United Nations.

Thirdly, the current humanitarian situation, including the famine in some parts of the country that has been declared by the Government, is disturbing. We therefore urge the Council to provide humanitarian support to those in need with all possible speed, and we urge our Government to provide the necessary support for facilitating humanitarian access and protecting humanitarian workers and property. Fourthly, the announcement of a national dialogue by the President of the Republic of South Sudan is a public call for full participation by all citizens in the quest for a lasting political solution to our country's political challenges. We urge that the dialogue be inclusive and facilitated by a reliable ceasefire that can ensure a secure environment in which all citizens can participate safely.

Fifthly, as a member of the United Nations, South Sudan has an obligation to fulfil its duties and responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations. We are aware that the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is approaching the renewal of its mandate. We ask that the new UNMISS mandate enable it to provide capacity support to the Government of South Sudan for human rights protection and the rule of law, for compliance with resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) and for the professionalization of policing services. Sixthly, we are pleased that the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have committed to coordinating efforts to seek a political solution to the challenges our country faces. We urge the Council to partner with our Government with the aim of making a reality of the stipulations in the AU-United Nations-IGAD joint communiqué of 29 January.

We urge the Council to be proactive in engaging the Government of South Sudan so as to realieze the political expectations contained in the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, and we urge the conflicting partiesn to commit to abiding by the decisions of the Council.

The President: I thank Ms. Sunday for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom.

As we sit safely in the Council Chamber, villages in South Sudan are being raided, plundered and set ablaze. Thousands of men, women and children are being driven from their homes, separated from their families and forced to endure terror and hunger as they seek safety in squalid camps. The toll of suffering in South Sudan has grown inexorably. At the close of 2015, some 2 million people had been displaced. Today, that figure has risen to 3 million, almost half of whom are refugees in neighbouring countries, including up to 1 million in Uganda.

Last month alone, the brutal cycle of raiding, retaliation and counter-retaliation compelled another

80,000 people to flee and, most telling of all, famine has been declared in areas of former Unity State — the first famine in the world in six years. Any visitor to that region of South Sudan will know that its green and fertile plains are watered by the tributaries of the White Nile. Nature and geography therefore cannot explain why famine has struck. Only the avarice and folly of human beings are to blame. I am reminded of the words of the hymn by Bishop Heber: "Though every prospect pleases ... only man is vile". We should be in no doubt that famine could blight other areas if the fighting does not stop. Against that background, no member of the Security Council can escape the responsibility to renew our efforts to restore peace in South Sudan.

Today, and each day afterwards, we must demonstrate the unity of the Council over what needs to be done. The peace accord of 2015 must be revived in order to deliver a genuine political process that embraces all people of South Sudan and begin the task of reconciliation and healing. There are three key steps to achieving that. First, there can be no real dialogue as long as South Sudan is ravaged by fighting. All parties must respect an immediate cessation of hostilities. As President, Salva Kiir is responsible for taking the first step and others must follow.

Secondly, there must be impartial leadership of the effort to revive the political process. Lastly, any talks will bring long-term peace only if all South Sudanese are represented. That means including not only the opposing forces but also other armed groups, political parties, displaced people, refugees, young people and women. President Konaré, the High Representative of the African Union (AU) for South Sudan, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Secretary-General António Guterres have resolved to drive the process forward together. I also welcome President Mogae, Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, responsible for enforcing the implementation of the peace agreement.

We in the Security Council must demonstrate our wholehearted support for their efforts, and those responsible for atrocities must be brought to account through the establishment of a hybrid court. Given the scale of the suffering, all of the opposing forces have a special responsibility to enable the delivery of aid wherever it is required, anywhere in the country. I am deeply concerned about the reports that the Government of South Sudan has denied its own citizens the help they so desperately need by blocking humanitarian deliveries, including in Unity State, where famine has struck. We should all make clear that denying food to the starving is simply unconscionable; nor can we accept a situation in which the Government or any armed group obstructs aid agencies in their efforts to deliver emergency supplies or United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in its efforts to protect civilians. We should also spell out with unity, clarity and conviction the progress that we expect from the Government. We must back that up by resolving that the Council will consider alternative measures, including an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on individuals, if that progress fails to materialize.

The United Kingdom remains convinced that an arms embargo would serve to protect ordinary South Sudanese from the worst excesses of military power, and on a future occasion we will ask the Council to reconsider that measure. Our strength of feeling arises partly from Britain's profound ties of history and friendship with the people of South Sudan. We were a guarantor of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, which paved the way for South Sudan to achieve independence. The United Kingdom was a witness to the peace accord of 2015 that sought, unavailingly, to end the current conflict. We are now the second biggest bilateral donor to South Sudan and we are strengthening UNMISS peacekeeping by deploying almost 400 British military engineers, medics and a field hospital.

The Council is aware that more than 200,000 civilians have taken shelter inside United Nations sites across South Sudan, unable to leave those barbed-wire confines lest they be murdered for no other reason than their ethnicity. Day after day, UNMISS tries to protect those civilians, and I know that British peacekeepers will help UNMISS fulfil that task. But South Sudan's people should not have to rely on outside protection. And if our efforts falter, the Council should be in no doubt that South Sudan's tragedy could become even worse. There is an urgent need for collective action, particularly by neighbouring countries, who are already hosting 1.4 million refugees. As Ms. Sunday has just told the Council, the innocent and the most vulnerable are enduring the greatest suffering in this war.

We are all here today because we have an obligation to act, and we cannot leave this meeting believing that our work is done. We should acknowledge that a terrible failure of political leadership lies behind the bloodshed. At every level we must therefore place pressure on the leaders of South Sudan, both in Government and in opposition, to act in the best interests of their people. We — the Security Council, the United Nations, IGAD and the AU — must help the South Sudanese to come together and agree on a common vision for their country's future. And we should all stand ready to make that vision a reality.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

Mr. Selim (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, on behalf of my Government, I would like to to express my condolences to the people and the Government of the United Kingdom for the heinous terrorist attack that has cost the lives of innocent people. The expanding area where such acts occur shows how terrorist organizations are trying to instil fear and despair in our societies. It behoves us all to take measures and resolutions aimed at frustrating such murderous plans.

I would like to warmly thank the United Kingdom presidency of the Security Council for organizing today's important meeting, and to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General, the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission for South Sudan and the representative of civil society for their informative briefings.

On 9 July 2011, the world witnessed the Republic of South Sudan's declaration of its independence in response to the will of its people. It was a crystallization of the aspirations of its people and their hopes for a better future. However, less than three years after the birth of that State, those hopes suffered a setback. The country found itself in a dilemma, beset by armed violence that arose from acute political divisions, exacerbated by a devastating economic crisis. Those divisions have led some parties to the conflict to become focused on and trapped by their ethnicities and thereby disregard the aspirations expressed by the people of South Sudan in July 2011.

For six years — the age of the nascent State of South Sudan — the causes of the conflict became more acute, while the international community failed to fully recognize the extent of the challenges that South Sudan was facing. It was as if the responsibility of the international community had ended with the declaration of independence, without anyone taking stock of the deep-rooted causes of conflict. The subsequent developments in South Sudan have shown that international support for countries that are in political transition is crucial, both pre- and post-independence. We fully recognize the dangerous repercussions of this crisis for peace and stability in East Africa, and its enormous human and economic toll. The crisis could spill into the neighbouring States that are shouldering the majority of the responsibility for humanitarian assistance if it is not contained in a just and comprehensive manner.

The most important question is how to deal with the current situation and avoid the earlier mistakes of the international community in dealing with South Sudan since its independence, which means working to put an end to the suffering caused by displacement, sexual violence and famine. In that regard, our vision is based on a comprehensive approach. It includes a number of principles and measures that should be taken together in order to deal with the crisis and its root causes:

First, all efforts should be based on the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed in August 2015, as a comprehensive reference point for all the efforts to achieve a political settlement. The agreement includes all the basic elements necessary to reach a political solution and a peaceful transition of power.

Secondly, the call for a comprehensive national dialogue issued by President Salva Kiir is an opportunity that must be taken advantage of, as it provides an alternative forum for all parties to renounce violence and deal with divisions in a political context. We should therefore seek to enable such a dialogue to succeed without marginalizing any political or ethnic group. The responsibility of the international community is to provide political support for that dialogue. In that regard, Egypt is ready to use its historic relations with the region and all of the regional parties to provide whatever assistance the people of South Sudan need, to help to facilitate a dialogue and to arrive at results that can set the country on the road to peace and stability.

Thirdly, all parties have an urgent moral, legal and human obligation to put an end to all forms of violence, abide by international law and its related relevant principles, assume their responsibilities towards civilians, and help facilitate the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan, which requires that it be able to reach all affected areas immediately and without restrictions in order to implement the Council's mandate. Creating obstacles to humanitarian efforts will only lead to more suffering, increase the human costs of the struggle and erode the regional and international efforts aimed at reaching a political settlement for the crisis and at ending the suffering of the civilians.

For its part, Egypt has intensified bilateral talks with the Government of South Sudan and has received President Salva Kiir in Cairo wth the goal of supporting all efforts to achieve a political solution. In the past few weeks, President Al Sisi has continued to make efforts to that end, including by visiting Uganda and Kenya and dealing with the active regional parties in order to strengthen the efforts to put an end to the conflict and support stability. We have seen that our brother countries appreciate the role that we have played in this conflict. At the same time, we emphasize the importance of the coordination between the regional and international efforts being undertaken by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Security Council to revive the political process as an alternative to violence. We must understand that no political effort will succeed unless it includes a set of measures that deal with the root causes of the problem.

We must enhance the strength and capacity of State institutions and their organizational structure and reform them, as well as creating the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing, in accordance with chapter V of the peace agreement. All efforts must focus on the most important purpose — strengthening the concept of citizenship and transcending the tribal affiliations that have been exploited both internally and externally, in order to increase stability and address those divisions. It is vital to avoid a collapse of the country's State institutions and to maintain and strengthen them in the future. In that regard, sanctions-based approaches are unwise. They have not been useful and could worsen the situation. Egypt has seen the possible consequences of the collapse of States in its region close-up. We know that such a vacuum can be filled only by anarchy and armed groups that are extremely difficult to control.

In conclusion, Egypt reiterates its commitment to deploying every possible effort to reach a comprehensive settlement through the current membership of the Security Council, as well as our membership of the United Nations as a whole and of the African Union Peace and Security Council, taking into consideration the excellent relations that link Egypt with all the parties to the conflict in South Sudan.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): I would first like to thank this afternoon's briefers. We value Mr. Mogae's regional perspective, and I would also like to sincerely thank Ms. Betty Sunday for her testimony here today. It is important to bring those first-hand accounts to the Security Council's attention.

I was here less than six years ago and I distinctly remember the celebrations, the dancing and the jumping for joy when South Sudan gained its independence and joined the United Nations. Since then, the hopes and dreams of the people of South Sudan for achieving peace and prosperity have been shattered. The current conflict is predominantly a man-made disaster that could have been avoided. It has caused too much suffering, led to innumerable violations of human rights and triggered a humanitarian crisis of immense proportions. It must end.

I would like to highlight three aspects that I believe we should focus on as we work to end this horrific conflict. First of all, the fighting must stop and the civilian population must be protected. We know that the primary responsibility for that lies with the Government and the parties to the conflict. We, the international community, acting through the United Nations, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), must work closely together and assist in finding a political solution to the conflict. In that regard, I welcome the leadership of the Secretary-General, President Konaré and President Mogae. The joint consultative meeting between the African Union, IGAD and the United Nations on the margins of the AU Summit is an example of the kind of coordination that is necessary to put real pressure on the parties to the conflict. The crisis in South Sudan is also part of a complex set of challenges facing the Horn of Africa. I again want to underline the need for a holistic regional approach, as we have also heard from previous speakers.

Secondly, the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan of August 2015 must remain the cornerstone of our efforts. The increasing fragmentation of the parties to the conflict and the reports of growing tensions between various ethnic groups underscore the importance of complementing the continued implementation of the Agreement with an inclusive political process. The proposal for a national dialogue could offer a way forward. However, the legitimacy and effectiveness of such a dialogue can be assured only if it includes representatives of all parties to the conflict and other stakeholders in South Sudanese society. Simply put, genuine inclusivity is of paramount importance. In particular, we must ensure that women — half of the population — have an equal say in the dialogue. For the past few years, Sweden, together with UN-Women, has worked with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus of South Sudan. We have sought to strengthen their ability to represent grass-roots women and generate new ideas to advance the peace process. The voices of the members of the Caucus deserve to be heard at the international level, including by the Council.

Thirdly, the immensely difficult situation for women and girls in South Sudan must be addressed. It should improve drastically and without further delay. The alarming number of cases and accounts of sexual and gender-based violence are absolutely harrowing and are a sad reminder of my duties during my time at the United Nations as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The perpetrators of such acts must be brought to justice and their victims must receive care and compensation. In that regard, the hybrid court for South Sudan envisaged in the peace agreement could be an important measure for fighting impunity. Furthermore, the unprecedented level of recruitment and use of children by the parties to the conflict is unacceptable and should be addressed without delay.

I want to pay tribute to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the United Nations country team for their invaluable efforts to protect civilians, including the steps they have taken to increase the safety of women and girls. It is unacceptable that UNMISS is being hindered from fulfilling its mandate, and that deployment of the regional protection force has been delayed.

We must work jointly and resolutely to ensure that the hopes and dreams of a whole generation are not lost. The urgency of ending the conflict in South Sudan cannot be overstated. It must remain at the top of the international agenda.

Mrs. Zemene (Ethiopia): We would once again like to thank the United Kingdom presidency for organizing today's meeting on the situation in South Sudan. We express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his briefing and for all the efforts that he has made since assuming office to address the security and humanitarian situation in South Sudan as one of his top priorities. We are also pleased to see President Mogae, and we are very grateful to him for his unwavering commitment and dedication to discharging his heavy and difficult responsibilities as Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission. We in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the region are very indebted to him. We would also like to thank Ms. Sunday for her detailed briefing.

Though not all the causes may be exactly the same as in Somalia, in South Sudan there is also a looming humanitarian catastrophe in which millions are at risk of food insecurity. The situation is exacerbated by the high levels of insecurity that have resulted from the continued fighting and intercommunal violence in the country, coupled with a drought and a deepening economic crisis. Famine has already been declared in some counties, and saving lives through urgent international humanitarian assistance has become a top priority. In that regard, unhindered humanitarian access is indeed critical if we are to come to the rescue of the millions of South Sudanese in need of urgent lifesaving assistance. We welcome President Salva Kiir's expressed commitment to restore freedom of movement to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and humanitarian actors.

South Sudan has suffered for far too long, and the situation can be alleviated only through a cessation of all hostilities and violence in the country. That is why we remain extremely concerned by the reports of continued fighting between Government and opposition forces in several parts of the country and of its devastating consequences for the civilian population. Without genuine and inclusive political dialogue, there can be no end to the violence and the situation is bound to get worse. No cause is so noble that it should hinder our unity in helping South Sudan to achieve national reconciliation, security and peace.

The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of 2015 remains an important framework for ending the conflict in South Sudan and bringing sustainable peace to the country. The lack of meaningful progress in its implementation has been a source of great concern, and Mr. Mogae's briefing today demonstrates only too clearly that there is reason for even greater concern. It emphasizes the importance of reinvigorating the peace process with the goal of ensuring full implementation of the peace agreement and restoring peace and security through greater inclusivity, forgiveness and reconciliation.

The national dialogue initiative announced by President Salva Kiir has the potential to facilitate that objective, and we in the IGAD region have reiterated our unanimous support for that initiative while calling on the Government to ensure that it is conducted in an all-inclusive manner. Of course, for that to happen the necessary conditions have to be established, which is why the parties to the conflict should cease all hostilities.

The continued and collective commitment of IGAD, the African Union and the United Nations to the search for lasting peace, security and stability in South Sudan, as encapsulated in the joint press statement of January 29, is imperative. In line with the understanding reached between the three organizations, former President Alpha Oumar Konaré has already started his shuttle diplomacy with a visit to South Sudan. He has also met for consultations with my Prime Minister in his capacity as Chair of IGAD. Although we will not be able to hear from him today about the outcome of the consultations and progress made thus far, we remain hopeful that his efforts, in close consultations with IGAD and the United Nations, will help to ensure the inclusivity of the national dialogue and the implementation of the peace agreement. We believe that it is important that the Security Council support those efforts and send a strong and unified message to all the parties in South Sudan to engage seriously and constructively. I would again like to reiterate our firm conviction that if there is unity in the Council, it will not be overly difficult or impossible to make headway in achieving peace in South Sudan — peace that is rooted in ownership for the country and that ensures the safety, security and dignity of the people of South Sudan in all their diversity.

The deployment of a regional protection force (RPF) continues to be very important, and we note that progress, even if slow, has been made in that regard. As the Secretary-General rightly stated in his report (S/2017/224), the cooperation of the South Sudanese Government, as well as the support of regional and international partners, continues to be extremely critical to facilitating deployment of the force. Now more than ever, perhaps, it is self-evident that a regional protection force is needed, as is the full cooperation of the Government in facilitating its deployment. IGAD's Council of Ministers reaffirmed their support for this at their meeting last week and called for the RPF's speedy deployment. As a troop-contributing country, Ethiopia would like to take this opportunity to once again reiterate our firm commitment to deploying our forces as part of the RPF, and preparations are well under way to deploy an advance company in the near future.

Finally, regardless of what we in the region and the rest of the international community can do to help, it is ultimately up to the South Sudanese people themselves to address the enormous difficulties that they are facing today, including the interconnected challenges of peace, relief and inclusivity to which President Mogae so eloquently referred, which have serious implications for the lasting survival of their new nation. We therefore hope that all South Sudanese parties will rise to the challenge and work to restore peace through genuine dialogue and reconciliation.

Mr. Amendola (Italy): I thank you, Sir, especially for convening this meeting and focusing on the need for action. I thank the Secretary-General for his update on the situation in South Sudan and reiterate Italy's appreciation of and support for his plan of action, as it marks a first step towards the way out of the current crisis. I also thank President Mogae and Ms. Sunday for their insightful remarks.

With regard to the need for action, as we have heard today, the security situation in South Sudan continues to deteriorate. The political landscape is increasingly fragmented along ethnic lines. The nation is being undone by widespread violations of human rights, impunity, gender-based violence and the recruitment of child soldiers, and the humanitarian crisis is reaching a tipping point. Famine has already been declared in some parts of the country. The staff of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, humanitarian personnel — including religious volunteers — and their facilities have been attacked, looted and impeded in their efforts to provide relief to the population. As you have said, Mr. President, time is running out. Clearly, the Security Council needs to pursue a strategy following up on what we agreed on today in presidential statement S/PRST/2017/4.

We are friends of South Sudan. In 2011, we all supported South Sudan's independence. We welcomed President Kiir's announcement of the national dialogue, but for a dialogue to be credible and effective, it requires two preconditions and a clear and common objective. First, there is the matter of the ceasefire. Along with the Secretary-General and other Council members, we believe that the only possible solution to the conflict is a political one. To achieve that, the parties have to stop fighting. For that, South Sudan's regional partners are the actors with the greatest potential influence. The African Union Special Representative's shuttle diplomacy, the United Nations engagement in the country and the Security Council itself can also make a significant contribution. In the Council, we are working to maintain our focus on a first concrete step, which is key to moving the process forward. We therefore support President Konaré's request to the South Sudanese Government to announce a unilateral ceasefire.

Secondly, there is the issue of inclusivity. Our engagement is aimed at promoting a truly inclusive national dialogue, open to all national political stakeholders, as well as to representatives of civil society and religious leaders. A dialogue could be the tool needed to end the conflict and help respond to the profound impact of the current humanitarian crisis. We can step up our political engagement with the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in order to lay the foundation for achieving that goal. But we must first establish security guarantees. The current progress on deploying a regional protection force is still limited. We call on the South Sudanese parties to cooperate constructively with the United Nations so as to improve security standards in Juba, and to refrain from obstructing humanitarian access.

Thirdly, there is the issue of the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, which the parties to the conflict signed in 2015. Few of its elements have been implemented — the proposed hybrid court and the reconciliation process come to mind — and implementation of some of the others should be relaunched. The success of a national dialogue will depend on achieving those goals.

Italy continues to provide humanitarian support to the people affected by the famine and the tragic situation in South Sudan. We have just announced a new contribution in response to the Secretary-General's appeal, but the humanitarian crisis in the country is mostly man-made. It is time for action. Let us work seriously, cooperatively and jointly in the Council, as well as at the regional and international levels, to return peace to South Sudan.

Mr. Ali (Kazakhstan): I would like to join previous speakers in thanking Secretary-General Guterres, President Mogae, the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, and civil-society representative Ms. Sunday for their briefings.

Kazakhstan fully commends and supports the Secretary-General's commitment to finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in South Sudan, for which there is no military option. We should strengthen the capacities of the Transitional Government of National Unity to address the political, economic, and humanitarian challenges that it is facing, including the full implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. We stress the importance of the work of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) in monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the Agreement, as well as the tasks of the Government. In order to make JMEC's work more effective, all South Sudanese parties should implement their commitments in full and cooperate fully with the Chair of JMEC.

Kazakhstan supports an inclusive national dialogue aimed at tangible results, in which all leaders in the conflict can participate. We concur with the African Union (AU) High Representative to South Sudan, Mr. Konaré, that that dialogue must be led by independent personalities who enjoy wide public support. In that regard, we welcome President Salva Kiir's promise to ensure the safety and freedom of all of the participants. We must seek all possible ways to support the AU High Representative's shuttle diplomacy in promoting dialogue and ensuring the implementation of the Agreement.

The chances of achieving the goal of ending the conflict by political means and mediation will be further enhanced by closer collaboration between the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the United Nations and other stakeholders. We therefore encourage the international community to support the Transitional Government in furthering that important political process. We agree that IGAD should play a leading role in resolving the conflict in South Sudan, because it has always been at the forefront in addressing problems in the region. We look forward to the forthcoming joint consultative meeting between the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Security Council at which issues relating to South Sudan will be considered.

The human suffering caused by the serious famine in some regions of South Sudan demands the international community's urgent attention. The effects of the famine can be significantly alleviated if the South Sudanese Government cooperates positively with the United Nations and humanitarian actors by facilitating access to conflict-affected areas and by providing free movement to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

We are also concerned about the recruitment and use of children, in violation of international law, and about sexual and gender-based violence, both of which have reached alarming proportions. Closer coordination between UNMISS and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict is essential if we are to address those issues and end impunity.

The recommendations of the AU Commission of Inquiry to put transitional justice mechanisms in place, including a hybrid court, should be speedily implemented with the technical assistance of the United Nations Secretariat.

The mandate of UNMISS has been impeded for several months now, owing to the imposition of new immigration conditions affecting UNMISS personnel, and that procedure must be addressed. Likewise, the speedy deployment of a regional protection force is essential to reinforcing the overall security in the country. A full operational UNMISS and regional protection force would contribute significantly to improving the security situation. Kazakhstan is ready to join the multilateral action to propel South Sudan on its path towards peace and security, which are the prerequisites for regional stability.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank President Mogae and Ms. Sunday for their briefings.

We are outraged by the events unfolding in South Sudan, especially the widespread violence, ongoing atrocities and obstruction of humanitarian access. Rather than committing to the ceasefire called for in the 2015 peace agreement endorsed by the Security Council, South Sudan's leaders, both in Government and in opposition movements, have chosen to undertake new military offensives and orchestrate militia attacks, placing their own interests above those of their people.

Last December, some colleagues in the Security Council argued that pressure would be counterproductive because it would block a renewed political process, but there has been no progress since December. Instead, the situation has deteriorated and is even more grave now. There is ongoing and active fighting. In the past three weeks alone, 40,000 South Sudanese have been displaced to Uganda, with almost 500,000 displaced since last July. There are almost 5 million people facing severe hunger, and famine has been declared in two counties, with the very real prospect that it will spread. The famine is not a result of drought; it is the result of leaders who are more interested in political power and personal gain than in stopping violence and allowing humanitarian access.

The Government's continued unconscionable impediments to humanitarians seeking access to assist famine-stricken populations may amount to deliberate starvation tactics. There are reports of civilians being deliberately targeted on an ethnic basis, rampant sexual violence, widespread unlawful recruitment of child soldiers, the destruction of homes and the looting of property. It is not the first time in this now three-year-old conflict that Government forces have employed a scorched-earth campaign. Since September 2016 alone, almost 17,000 structures have been destroyed in just part of the former state of Central Equatoria.

Our goals are clear. The parties must cease hostilities, engage in meaningful and inclusive dialogue and deliver on their repeated promises to allow unfettered access for humanitarian organizations. Any political process must be truly inclusive of all South Sudanese voices in order to be sustainable and credible. Dialogue must complement the peace agreement, the core elements of which include a permanent ceasefire, power-sharing and critical reforms — a road map to lasting peace. We welcome the continued commitment of the United Nations and regional organizations to peace and stability in South Sudan, and we look to the shuttle diplomacy of the African Union High Representative to South Sudan, President Konaré, and to full engagement on the part of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to yield results in the next month. It is against that backdrop that the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the peacekeeping mission authorized by the Council, is being prevented by both Government and opposition forces from fully carrying out its mandate. Moreover, the Council-authorized regional protection force has encountered unacceptable delays in deploying. The Council should take seriously this deliberate repudiation of its Chapter VII mandate.

The international community must make use of all of the tools at its disposal to address the crisis in

South Sudan and the many obstructions to the work of UNMISS. We have received warning after warning about the prospect for further mass atrocities, but we do not need such warnings to know that the sustained level of violence and ongoing atrocities in South Sudan are beyond unacceptable. As has been noted, an arms embargo is one tool that the Council could use to address the ongoing violence in South Sudan. Similarly, our unanimously adopted sanctions resolution 2206 (2015) gives us the ability to designate individuals whose actions or policies threaten peace in South Sudan, including those who obstruct the activities of international peacekeeping or humanitarian missions, those whose actions or policies expand the conflict and those who engage in the targeting of civilians, including women and girls.

Finally, I would like to say a word about accountability. Progress in establishinga hybrid court for South Sudan is desperately needed, and we urge the African Union and South Sudan to expedite progress on that important mechanism in the coming months. Peace and justice can and should be pursued simultaneously.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by welcoming the presence of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom at today's meeting, as well as the initiative taken by the British presidency to organize this meeting on South Sudan. I would also like to thank the speakers for their briefings. In particular, I commend the Secretary-General for the strength of his personal commitment to South Sudan. France fully subscribes to the priorities he has just outlined and fully supports him in his efforts to promote a return to peace and stability in that deeply scarred country.

After three years of conflict, the situation in South Sudan remains a serious source of concern. Famine is now added to the violence, atrocities and human rights violations that have been endured by the people of South Sudan for far too long, and to a large extent it is a result of those other problems. We cannot and should not remain inactive in the face of this situation. We should pursue three objectives.

First, priority should be given to a cessation of hostilities and access to vulnerable populations. The responsibility rests with all of the parties to the conflict and, first and foremost, with the Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition. They must finally respect the multiple ceasefire agreements that they have reached and that they violate constantly. The emergence of militias and the expansion of the combat zones make that first step all the more essential.

The cessation of hostilities must be accompanied by an immediate end to the obstructions that have been inflicted on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and humanitarian actors. The attacks, violence, harassment and looting to which the Blue Helmets and humanitarian actors fall victim are contrary to international humanitarian law. We salute the courage and dedication of those men and women in their tireless efforts to help the most vulnerable. The Council must be ready to impose sanctions on all who engage in such attacks against them. We also strongly regret that the protection and assistance efforts of both UNMISS and humanitarian personnel have been subject to access restrictions and bureaucratic barriers. The Government of South Sudan must make every effort to put an end to such obstructions and to facilitate these people's work. Only progress on those two fronts — an end to violence and the facilitation of humanitarian access — will make it possible to establish an environment conducive to peaceful political dialogue.

My second point is about the implementation of a political settlement, which is the only possible long-term solution to the country's challenges. In that respect, we know the terms of the political solution, for they are contained in the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of August 2015. That document provides a comprehensive and detailed road map that must be implemented in order to restore security and stability in the country. In that regard, we welcome the work of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) under the leadership of President Mogae. It is essential to continue to monitor the peace agreement and to firmly remind the Transitional Government of National Unity — itself the result of the Agreement — and all other South Sudanese stakeholders of their responsibilities. Again, it is unacceptable that those who have committed to implementing those measures do not respect their word.

In that context, following the example of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union, the Council must recall its expectations regarding the implementation of the measures provided for in the peace agreement, including and perhaps primarily in the field of security. We therefore welcome the continued engagement of

IGAD and the African Union, in full coordination with the United Nations. The mission entrusted to President Alpha Konaré to advance the implementation of the peace agreement and to promote the inclusiveness of the national dialogue is essential in that regard. We call on all parties to work with him to that end. Any national dialogue would be in vain, even counterproductive, if it detracted from the implementation of the peace agreement and was not fully inclusive and conducted so as to assure its autonomy, its impartiality and the trust of all participants. In that regard, I would like to recall that France is of the view that instituting an arms embargo would improve the prospects for a political solution. By restricting access to weapons used to commit abuses against civilians, an embargo would help to lower the level of violence and foster an environment conducive to peaceful political dialogue.

Thirdly and lastly, we must remember that the cycle of violence and suffering can be broken only if real progress is made in the areas of justice and accountability. As Ms. Sunday said, women have suffered disproportionately in this conflict. The use of rape as a weapon of war, which has been abundantly documented by the United Nations, the African Union and civil-society organizations, may constitute a war crime or even a crime against humanity. Violence against children and the recruitment of child soldiers are equally revolting violations.

Faced with the current inadequacies in the efforts to combat impunity in South Sudan, we must remind the perpetrators of those crimes that they will be held to account. We can help to prevent such crimes by considering the punishment of those who commit or order them. We should also support judicial accountability efforts. Again, the peace agreement provides for mechanisms to that end, including the establishment of a hybrid court. We call for progress in that direction and reiterate our encouragement for the work of the African Union along those lines. If there is no improvement in this area, violence and human rights violations will only be repeated in South Sudan again and again.

Let us be realistic. The tragedy in South Sudan may yet worsen. But if the parties assume their responsibilities and the Council remains fully mobilized, that does not have to be a foregone conclusion.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would once again like to thank the British presidency for convening this important meeting. And, of course, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in South Sudan (S/2017/224). We are encouraged by his approach and his leadership. I would also like to thank President Mogae for being here and for his work on this difficult problem. And I thank Ms. Sunday for her presence.

Bolivia is of the view that, in line with the efforts of the Secretary-General, it is essential that the Council be united in supporting the political process, which is the only possible solution to the situation in South Sudan. We support the point made today by the Secretary-General on the three elements that are essential to making progress in resolving this tragic conflict: first, a cessation of hostilities; secondly, a resumption of the peace process; and thirdly, unrestricted humanitarian access. Similarly, the combined support and continuing follow-up that regional organizations, the United Nations and the international community can provide will be key to ensuring that the dialogue process is genuinely inclusive and enjoys legitimacy.

In addition, I would like to express the support of my delegation for the joint press statement of 29 January 2017 by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the United Nations in support of a national dialogue. In that regard, I would also like to stress our recognition of the work and good offices of the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Mr. Mogae, and the African Union High Representative for South Sudan, Mr. Alpha Konaré.

With regard to the security situation, we call for compliance with the peace agreement on the cessation of hostilities between the parties and the end of the clashes in the regions of Equatoria, the Upper Nile, Bahr el-Ghazal, Malakal and Wau Shilluk, which have led to a general situation of insecurity and the ongoing displacement of civilians, of whom women and children are the most vulnerable. We believe that it is important to ensure that the Government, together with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), works to guarantee unrestricted access for humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians in the areas that need them the most.

We are concerned about the reports of human rights violations, sexual violence and the recruitment and use of children. We call for chapter V of the peace agreement to be upheld, and we hope that the African Union will take all necessary measures to establish a just, impartial and credible hybrid court for South Sudan. It is also important to welcome the progress made in the practical measures being taken to deploy a regional protection force, which could contribute significantly to mitigating the worsening security situation as long as we are clear about what its functions will be. The regime's cooperation is also very important in that regard.

Concerning the humanitarian situation, the announcement by the Food and Agriculture Organization of localized famine in Leer and Mayendit counties represents an urgent call to the Government and the international community to take immediate measures to mitigate it and ensure that the situation does not deteriorate further. According to figures issued by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 100,000 South Sudanese are in a state of famine and 5.5 million are experiencing food insecurity and in need of concerted action. According to Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien and his appeal to the international community and financial donors, it is essential that we raise $1.25 billion to deal with this difficult problem.

The famine is clearly caused by a number of factors, including the armed conflict between the various parties, the difficulties of humanitarian access and the severe drought in the region, which also shows that the effects of climate change increase the potential for conflict. That is why we call on the Government to work together with humanitarian workers and UNMISS staff to bring the necessary assistance to the people in those regions as soon as possible.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the joint work of regional organizations is fundamental to efforts to develop action plans aimed at strengthening the institutions of South Sudan. Those plans must address the institutions' structural problems and should respect the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness whereby all development cooperation should be adapted to the country receiving it, aligned with the country's plans, coordinated among the parties and, lastly, based on the mutual responsibility of all stakeholders. Similarly, we believe that the conflict in South Sudan should be resolved by the people of South Sudan themselves, with the help of the international community, while respecting the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Mogae and Ms. Sunday for their assessments of the situation in South Sudan. We also welcome the personal efforts of the Secretary-General to reach a settlement on South Sudan.

We agree on the importance of coordinating actions by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the United Nations aimed at ensuring peace, stability and security in South Sudan. We support the Secretary-General's approach in seeking African solutions to African problems with the appropriate support of the United Nations, including where the problem of South Sudan is concerned. We believe that it is appropriate that IGAD should play a central role in that process. We credit the Secretariat for its recent provision of more balanced assessments in its monthly reports, among which we would like to emphasize the progress that has been made in preparing for the deployment of a regional protection force. As the information makes clear, the time frame for the deployment of front-line units was postponed somewhat through no fault of the South Sudanese. Juba's constructive position on the issue of the regional protection force is evidenced by the fact that the Government has allocated the first plot of land for their barracks, while as far as we know, the delays on the second plot are due to some unavoidable formalities.

We urge the Secretariat to continue to cooperate with Juba in order to resolve all the current problems involving the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), including the need to create a mechanism for the prompt resolution of visa problems and for determining the modalities for deploying the regional protection force while complying with the basic norms of peacekeeping.

We share the concerns about the country's disastrous humanitarian situation, and we note the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to improve things. We welcome President Kiir's statement on granting humanitarian access to the regions where there is a food crisis. We should not omit to note the assistance that has been given to the people of South Sudan by Khartoum. At the same time, considering the situation in neighbouring Somalia and Kenya, we should also point out that the famine in various parts of South Sudan is the result not only of security problems but also of bad weather.

We are also alarmed by the news of armed clashes in various parts of the country. We continue to hold the view that to a large degree those incidents are the result of command-and-control problems, as well as a certain lack of discipline among Government troops and those of the opposition. Another factor is the rift in anti-Government forces between supporters of Taban Deng Gai and Machar, with clashes that occur for inter-ethnic or simply criminal reasons.

We welcome President Kiir's announcement of the forthcoming holding of a national dialogue in the framework of the peace agreement and call for active support to it. We trust that the proposed amnesty will enable progress to be made in the political process and also help to resolve the problem of the presence of supporters of the former First Vice-President Riek Machar on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In general, we believe that the parameters of a national dialogue and the location of the consultations should be determined by the South Sudanese themselves. We agree that it will be impossible to promote national dialogue or implement the peace agreement if the ceasefire is not maintained. But it would be unfair to blame the continuing violence exclusively on the Transitional Government of National Unity.

We consider it absolutely inappropriate to bring up threats of genocide. The rise in inter-ethnic tensions is largely the result of provocative statements and actions by armed and criminal groups and undisciplined elements of the security forces. That hardly corresponds to the suggestions of some kind of purposeful, systematic policy on the part of the authorities.

We welcome the establishment within UNMISS of a working group on hate speech and incitement. We would like to emphasize the importance of preventing similar activities emanating from any country through Internet social networks, since otherwise the entire content of resolution 2327 (2016) would simply be ineffective.

Our position on the new Security Council sanctions against South Sudan is well known. If we are to establish lasting peace in South Sudan, what we need is not a Security Council arms embargo, but rather targeted measures to disarm the population and to demobilize and reintegrate combatants. We also believe that it is essential to heed the views of the regional Powers on the fact that this is not the time for proposals for introducing additional restrictions on Juba. Against that backdrop, we would point to information from United Nations experts that the same countries that appear to advocate introducing an arms embargo in the Security Council may be supplying South Sudan with weapons.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I thank the Secretary-General and the other briefers for their comprehensive presentations. I also commend the United Kingdom for providing a timely opportunity to discuss the further international efforts required to resolve the conflict in the world's youngest nation.

Basically, and tragically, almost all the worst fears about the fate of the country have become a reality. South Sudan is on the verge of chaos. Millions have been displaced from their homes. The economy is in ruins. Hunger and poverty are rampant. As the South Sudanese people suffer, the warring parties continue to pursue their goals by military means. Killings, abductions, rape, looting and the burning of homes now constitute a horrifying daily routine in South Sudan. Yet in recent months the situation has sunk to unprecedented new lows, with reports of growing ethnic violence and declarations of famine in some parts of the country. Leer county in Unity state is just one example. It is one of the epicentres of the famine, where more than 100,000 people face imminent starvation. Villages are deserted. Gunmen from both sides have torched crops and chased farmers from their fields. People are hiding in swamps. They eat water-lily roots and the occasional fish that they manage to catch. There are no schools and no health services. There is nothing but the fear of losing the only thing that still belongs to them — their lives. It is shameful that all of this is happening in the twenty-first century. It is a disgrace that we, the international community, have not managed to prevent it from happening. It is an outrage that the South Sudanese political leaders have failed to shoulder their responsibilities for their own people. Time is not on our side. But as long as we do not stand by idly, that human tragedy can still be averted.

How can we do that? We must shake up the deadly status quo and divert the energies currently squandered on war towards advancing peace. Public statements of condemnation and threats of consequences without action will not help. Both sides largely discount them as barking with no bite. Biting requires a get-tough approach that might truly be able alter the calculations and influence behaviour. If we are to stop the fighting, the flow of arms must be stopped. If we are to prevent public funds from being used for personal purposes, they must be made inaccessible to certain individuals.

If we are to stop attacks on civilians, the perpetrators must be held accountable.

That is why Ukraine believes that an arms embargo and additional targeted sanctions are still relevant if we are to prevent South Sudan from sliding into war and chaos. We do not believe that such measures will be a panacea. However, we do believe that they will reduce the parties' ability to continue fuelling the conflict. That will help to silence the military equipment they already have and stop desperately needed financial resources being spent on new weaponry.

Ukraine firmly believes that the conflict in South Sudan has no military solution. An inclusive political dialogue within the framework of the 2015 peace agreement is the only way to restore peace and stability in the country. In that regard, we welcome the initiative of the Government of South Sudan to launch a national dialogue aimed at promoting national reconciliation and inter-communal harmony among all groups in South Sudan. However, for it to be credible and effective, the hostilities must cease immediately, the rule of law must be restored and humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach those in need.

Finally, I would like to express Ukraine's full support to the Secretary-General's commitment to working closely with the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development member States and other partners to ensure inclusivity in the implementation of the peace agreement and the national dialogue process. As one of the troop and police contributors to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, Ukraine will continue to actively back United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts in that fragile country.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, the Senegalese delegation would like to thank the United Kingdom presidency for its initiative in convening this important briefing on South Sudan, over which Mr. Boris Johnson, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, was kind enough to preside. We also thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission for their important briefings, and we appreciate Ms. Betty Sunday's important presentation on the situation. Their statements have further highlighted the acuteness of the issue before the Council.

The crisis that has torn South Sudan apart for more than three years has led to an increase in violence and violations of human rights. My delegation would like not only to reiterate its profound concern about the worsening security situation in the country and its impact on the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, but also to condemn the armed incursions and threats against humanitarian workers and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), as well as the violations of the status-of-forces agreement, international humanitarian law and the security of the United Nations staff.

The repeated violations of the ceasefire agreement and the increasing hostilities in many parts of the country have, as we are all aware, led to a wave of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries and an increase in the number of internally displaced persons within the country, further worsening an already disastrous humanitarian situation. If we add to that the famine that is now present in various regions, it becomes a matter of urgency for us to act if we are to prevent the population from succumbing to disease and hunger. The fact is that the ongoing fighting and the economic collapse have left more than 100,000 people facing a situation of famine. According to various United Nations agencies, 1 million more are considered to be on the borderline of famine. It is the worst famine the country has seen since the conflict began.

My delegation therefore believes, and I think we can all agree, that only a political solution to the conflict in South Sudan will make it possible to resolve the disastrous humanitarian situation once and for all. We therefore call on the various parties to the conflict to resume dialogue and implement the peace agreement in the Republic of South Sudan. In that regard, we believe that the national dialogue process announced in December by President Salva Kiir could, if it proves to be truly inclusive, free and transparent, help to create conditions conductive to the restoration of peace in the country. That would endow the process with the necessary legitimacy and ensure ownership on the part of the South Sudanese population, without discrimination, with the support of the region and the international community. The national dialogue should also make it possible for those involved to discuss general issues, including issues crucial to governance, security-sector reform and national reconciliation, among others. It is in that spirit that we warmly encourage cooperation among the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations aimed at ensuring coordinated measures to support the peace process, including the national dialogue process, and at ensuring the broadest possible inclusivity in the national dialogue through the involvement of all the parties to the conflict in South Sudan.

Going back to the famine, President Alpha Konaré, the High Representative of the African Union for South Sudan, has made specific proposals aimed at mitigating the disastrous effects of the famine so as to ensure overall food security in the rest of South Sudan. That will require a cessation of hostilities, particularly in order to enable farming activity to resume. We therefore call on all of the armed groups to immediately cease hostilities and allow UNMISS — and we pay tribute here to the staff's untiring efforts in a hostile environment — to give humanitarian personnel access to the civilians who need their help. Unless unhindered access is provided immediately, the humanitarian situation can only get worse, and it will be the local population that will suffer most.

My country also supports the creation in South Sudan of a hybrid independent court for prosecuting the perpetrators of crimes and other atrocities against the civilian population, and we call on the Government of South Sudan to support the African Union in that endeavour.

Finally, with regard to the regional protection force — and we welcome the recent developments noted concerning its deployment — we urge the South Sudanese authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure its immediate deployment. Here I would like to pay tribute to the troop-contributing countries for their dedication to the cause of peace in South Sudan.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this timely briefing. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General, to Mr. Mogae, the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission for South Sudan, and to Ms. Sunday for their very informative briefings.

Japan remains deeply concerned about the ongoing hostilities and the dire humanitarian situation in South Sudan, which has been exacerbated by famine. Many lives are at stake. The members of the Security Council and international partners must continue to extend lifesaving support to the innocent people of South Sudan. In addition to the $22.4 million in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance announced in January, Japan decided last week to contribute an additional $6 million in response to the Secretary-General's call for international support to address the famine.

For international assistance to be effective it must reach those in need. To that end, safe and unhindered access is essential. We are troubled by the many reports of restrictions on humanitarian access, including on work permits, that only increase the suffering of innocent people. Worse still, aid providers continue to be targeted in such incidents as the tragic killing by unknown gunmen on 14 March of personnel from the International Organization for Migration. Japan calls on President Kiir to honour his previous commitments and take immediate action on the ground, including through improved humanitarian access at the local level and by working to bring about a cessation of hostilities. The primary responsibility to protect civilians rests with the Government of South Sudan. We urge that concrete progress on that front be made.

There is no alternative to a political process aimed at achieving genuine peace. Japan reiterates its full support for the collective commitment and close coordination on South Sudan demonstrated by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations in their joint statement in January. Japan welcomes the Secretary-General's ongoing engagement at this critical time. We also appreciate the strong involvement of both President Konaré and President Mogae, and we support their call for South Sudan to make the national dialogue as inclusive, free and transparent as possible. The Council should continue to be united in supporting those engagements and efforts. As part of the efforts to promote inclusivity and reconciliation, Japan is considering providing support to grass-roots peace initiatives through the United Nations Development Programme. The successful holding of a national day of prayer on 10 March with broad participation was a step in the right direction. The onus is now on President Kiir and the Government. We strongly urge President Kiir to build on that spirit in pursuit of a genuine and inclusive national dialogue process. Other parties should also renounce violence and cooperate in that national endeavour.

Japan takes note of some signs of progress on the deployment of a regional protection force, including regional countries' reaffirmation of their commitment to participating in the force, and by the visits by troop-contributing countries' reconnaissance teams and enablers to South Sudan. But there are still challenges to be resolved regarding the force's full deployment. We need further progress on land provision and airport coordination in order to ensure that it can function effectively. We again call on the Government to fully cooperate with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, including with regard to the regional protection force.

Notwithstanding our recent decision to end the activities of the Self-Defence Force engineering unit, Japan remains unwavering in its commitment to peace and stability in South Sudan. Japan will support efforts towards an inclusive national dialogue and work with the parties concerned for the smooth and effective operation of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, including the early deployment of a regional protection force. Japan will also continue to provide development cooperation and humanitarian assistance to those in need, thereby contributing to nation-building in South Sudan.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to join other speakers in thanking the presidency of the United Kingdom for this initiative. We were also grateful for the presence among us of the British Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson. We thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Sunday and Mr. Mogae for their statements.

Today's presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/4) and the Secretary-General's statement have covered all of the points in the text that we prepared for my statement this afternoon, so I will be very brief.

I will just say that the presidential statement establishes and clearly outlines five measures that are needed if progress is to be made on the situation in South Sudan. We believe, therefore, that we should urge the Council to remain vigilant in seeing those steps implemented in close cooperation with all of the regional organizations involved in issues related to South Sudan.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the United Kingdom for convening today's meeting and Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing. We listened attentively to the statements made by Chairman Mogae and Ms. Sunday.

Recent events show that the situation in South Sudan continues to be complicated. President Kiir has put forward an initiative on holding a national dialogue and promoting economic development. Meanwhile, the Government of South Sudan is facing numerous difficulties in implementing the peace agreement, maintaining national stability and addressing the humanitarian crisis and the famine.

China hopes that the international community will provide assistance in the following four areas: first, it should forcefully push for a political settlement of the question of South Sudan, since that is the only possible solution. The international community should continue to put pressure on all the parties in South Sudan to cease hostilities, return to the political settlement track and effectively implement the peace agreement. China welcomes President Kiir's initiative on holding a national dialogue and hopes that all of the parties in South Sudan will actively participate in that process, settle their differences through dialogue and consultations and promote reconciliation in a joint effort to achieve national peace, stability and development.

Secondly, the role of regional and subregional organizations should be brought into full play. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU) have done extensive mediation work on that issue. The United Nations should give full play to the comparative advantages and respective roles of IGAD and the AU, step up efforts to implement the joint statement signed by the three parties IN January during the AU Summit and lend greater support to mediation efforts led by Chairman Mogae of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and AU High Representative President Konaré, so as to create synergy in seeking a resolution to the situation in South Sudan.

Thirdly, we must enhance the capacity of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to fulfil its mandate. China is in favour of UNMISS playing a constructive role in assisting all of the parties in South Sudan to implement the peace agreement, protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access. We hope that the Government of South Sudan will actively implement the joint communiqué issued with the Security Council, as well as the relevant Council resolutions; and we support UNMISS in fulfilling its mandate by cooperating with the deployment of the regional protection force and increasing consultations with the United Nations and IGAD, thereby properly addressing any issues that might arise in the cooperation process.

Fourthly, South Sudan must be actively helped to combat the famine. We hope that the international community will provide active support to the disaster relief efforts of the South Sudanese Government, encourage all of the parties in South Sudan to act in the overall interest of the people and create favourable conditions for the speedy delivery of disaster relief to affected areas. The international community should help the Government increase investment in agriculture and infrastructure and enhance the Government's capacity for self-reliance and disaster resilience so as to promote sustainable economic and social development.

The Chinese Government has actively participated in and promoted the peace process in South Sudan by pushing for peace talks and dispatching peacekeepers. China has made its contribution to the peace process in South Sudan. Recently, the Special Representative of the Chinese Government on African Affairs visited Uganda, Kenya and South Africa, and exchanged views with the countries in the region on the situation in South Sudan. China will continue to play a constructive role in restoring peace, stability and development in South Sudan.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malok (South Sudan): At the outset, permit me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, and your delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. My delegation pledges its full support. I would like to assure the Council of my cooperation and support in tackling issues of concern to my country.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and former President Mogae, Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), and Ms. Sunday for their briefings. The Chairman is aware that the Transitional Government of National Unity submitted its October 2016 report. The previous report was in March. So far, JMEC has not raised any concerns to the Transitional Government of National Unity over the implementation of the chapters of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. Aside from the lack of the resources needed to implement chapter II, relating to security arrangements, the delay in the implementation of article 14 of chapter I is largely attributable to the Chair of the National Constitutional Amendment Committee.

We are delighted to report that the Chair of the Committee reported to Juba two weeks ago, and all efforts are being made to review the legislation necessary for the reform, consistent with chapter IV of the peace agreement. We wish to advise that it includes the incorporation of the agreement into the constitution of the Republic of South Sudan.

The Transitional Government of National Unity has repeatedly declared its firm commitment to implementing the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. In fact, it has already taken practical steps to that end in order to achieve lasting peace. It has established the Transitional Government of National Unity of the Republic of South Sudan, the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, the National Constitutional Amendment Committee and the Joint Military Ceasefire Commission, among other things. It has also implemented political inclusivity at the national level, as stipulated in the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. In other words, various political forces are represented in the Government's composition, in line with the peace agreement.

In an effort to revitalize peacebuilding, the Transitional Government of National Unity came up with a plan for reconciliation and national dialogue using a bottom-up approach — starting within the communities and all the way up to the national level. The Government has also welcomed the Action Plan for Peace and Reconciliation, launched by the South Sudan Council of Churches, as a means of reinforcing Government peacebuilding efforts. The Transitional Government of National Unity welcomes all stakeholders to join that effort. However, it is important to note that the peace agreement in South Sudan was not based on individuals, but rather on various parties. Therefore, it should not be held hostage by individuals who have chosen to self-exile for reasons best known to themselves.

The implementation of the peace agreement can, and will, go on without those individuals. National dialogue is a process, and those who are not ready to join now may join whenever they feel ready to do so. National dialogue is not an alternative to the peace agreement in South Sudan. The Transitional Government of National Unity has actively engaged with the United Nations through its interactions with various delegations that have visited the country. That includes the delegation of the Security Council in early September 2016, with which it signed a joint communiqué; the delegation of the United Nations strategic assessment team in early October 2016; the Head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan in early November 2016; the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Dieng; the High Commissioner for Human Rights and his assessment team; and the Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2206 (2015).

The Transitional Government of National Unity has also cooperated closely with UNMISS through its technical team. The two parties have reached a common understanding on various issues of concern, in particular with regard to the deployment of a regional protection force, which the Government has accepted without preconditions. They agreed on other issues of concern as well, including, but not limited to, freedom of movement for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), unhindered access for relief personnel to deliver humanitarian assistance to all populations in need in South Sudan and the establishment of a one-stop-one-shop system to facilitate and expedite the issuance of visas, timely customs clearance, flight clearance and the elimination of bureaucratic obstacles, among other things.

As was indicated earlier, the Transitional Government of National Unity has accepted the deployment of the Regional Protection Force without any strings attached. It took further steps by allocating a plot of land to host the proposed force that covers an area of 2.514 square kilometres. Furthermore, it has approved requests for a second plot of land for the Regional Protection Force. UNMISS has already submitted the names of those who are to join officials in Jubek, along with state authorities, to inspect and survey that land.

During a visit to the country's capital on Tuesday, 21 March, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, said that the first units of the regional protection force for South Sudan would be deployed within a few weeks. Having cooperated with the United Nations, the region and the entire international community, the Transnational Government of National Unity had expected that its efforts would be positively acknowledged, rather than negatively reported.

The Transnational Government of National Unity strongly rejects as baseless any accusation of looming genocide or ethnic cleansing in South Sudan. South Sudan is a diverse country composed of approximately 60 tribes and ethnicities that have been living in peace and harmony since ancient times. The conflict in South Sudan is political, and characterized by a power struggle on the part of those who seek to take power by force: it has no ethnic dimension, despite what has been alleged by certain circles. Using the ethnic divide serves to muddy the waters and, perhaps, warrants the application of punitive measures against the Government.

We commend the Secretary-General for the recent statement he made at his press conference at the United Nations Gigiri complex, in which he said that the risk of genocide in South Sudan had significantly diminished. Although, in our view, the statement did not go far enough to debunk the allegation of looming genocide, it is nevertheless a welcome development and a step in the right direction.

Furthermore, the Transnational Government of National Unity categorically rejects any accusation that its forces target civilians, or use sexual violence as a tactic of war. The Government has only carried out its constitutional mandate to protect civilians from attacks by rebels and maintain law and order, which are among the primary constitutional functions of any Government in the world. It has also exercised its right to self-defence when attacked by negative forces and criminal elements, which is in line with international law, including Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Transnational Government of National Unity therefore appeals to the United Nations, the region and the entire international community to encourage and support the genuine efforts of the Government to implement the peace agreement, specifically the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, including the transitional security arrangements, so as to enable the achievement of lasting peace and stability in the country and end the immense suffering of the people. The Government is ready to do its part. The challenge is how to deal with the spoilers of peace and the political opportunists. We have recently witnessed the formation of new rebel groups that are bent on dislodging the Government by military means. Even the Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission recently remarked that those new groups are composed of opportunists and criminals who have no coherent political agenda. Unless a clear message is sent to all rebel groups, they will continue to derail peace efforts.

The Transnational Government of National Unity thanks the United Nations and the donor community for their interventions in, and response to, the famine in the two counties of the former Unity state. The Government, however, takes issue with the accusation that it is responsible for the famine. It is also important to note that other parts of the country are affected by drought as a result of climate change. The Transnational Government of National Unity therefore takes this opportunity to state that it will spare no effort to address the situation and to call on the international community to assist in addressing that urgent matter.

The call for imposing targeted sanctions and an arms embargo would further aggravate the situation and hit vulnerable groups the hardest, as previous experience has shown.

I should like to conclude by reiterating my Government's stand on the implementation of the peace agreement in letter and spirit. The Transnational Government of National Unity accordingly appeals today to the United Nations, the region and the entire international community to encourage and support the genuine efforts of the Government in implementing the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, including the transitional security arrangements, so as to achieve lasting peace and stability in the country and eliminate the immense suffering of the people.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7907

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7907th meeting

Friday, 24 March 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Rycroft/Mr. Wilson	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Ms. Azoulay
	Italy	Mr. Amendola
	Japan	Mr. Minami
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and Brigadier General Fabrizio Parrulli, Commander of the Italian Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage.

Mr. Fedotov is joining today's meeting via video teleconference from Vienna.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/242, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2347 (2017).

I now give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: I thank the Security Council for this opportunity to brief it on this important topic, as well my United Nations colleagues Ms. Irina Bokova, Mr. Yury Fedotov and Brigadier General Fabrizio Parrulli.

I would like to start by expressing my sincere condolences to the loved ones of the victims of Wednesday's terrorist attack in London, as well as my deep sympathy to the people and the Government of the United Kingdom. We needed no reminder of the horror of terrorism. But the London attack — like those in Kabul, Baghdad, Maiduguri and so many other places recently — must move us to strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation in line with international human rights and humanitarian law standards.

In particular in armed conflict situations, today terrorists are not only destroying lives but are also visiting their horrific violence on historical sites and objects. The deliberate destruction of cultural heritage and the trafficking in items of great artistic, religious or cultural significance target individuals and communities on cultural and religious grounds. The protection of heritage, then, is not only a cultural issue, it is also a security and humanitarian imperative. Terrorist groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant exploit cultural sites to finance their activities while strengthening their linkages with transnational organized crime. They also destroy and traffic cultural heritage to undermine the power of culture as a bridge between generations and people of different backgrounds and religions. Resolution 2347 (2017), just adopted, aims to strengthen international cooperation to deprive terrorists of funding, but also to protect cultural heritage as a symbol of understanding and respect for all religions, beliefs and civilizations.

Awareness of the essential importance of the protection of cultural heritage is not new, but it has grown considerably over the past several years. In establishing the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali through resolution 2100 (2013), the Security Council established the link between the illicit trafficking of cultural objects and the financing of terrorism. Resolution 2322 (2016) urged States to bolster cooperation to prevent and combat trafficking in cultural property and related offences that benefit or may benefit terrorist groups. Meanwhile, during the fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the General Assembly expressed concern, in resolution 70/291, that terrorists may benefit from transnational organized crime in some regions, including from the trafficking of cultural property, and condemned the destruction of cultural heritage by terrorist groups. In paragraph 3 of resolution 68/127, the General Assembly deplored

> "attacks on religious places and shrines and cultural sites in violation of international law, in particular human rights and humanitarian law".

Moreover, there is already a strong international legal and normative framework to address these crimes. This is based on the United Nations Conventions against Transnational Organized Crime and Corruption, the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and the International Guidelines for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Responses with Respect to Trafficking in Cultural Property and other Related Offences.

Protecting cultural heritage requires us to make every effort to implement this international legal and normative framework and strengthen international cooperation. It also demands a global criminal-justice response that can prevent trafficking in cultural property by disrupting organized criminal and terrorist networks, including through anti-corruption and anti-money-laundering action, and bringing perpetrators to justice. We need to put a stronger focus on investigation, cross-border cooperation and exchange of information, and on bringing in private and public sector partners, including dealers and the tourism sector, to promote supply-chain integrity and stop the illicit trade and sale of cultural property.

The United Nations system, particularly through the entities of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), is increasingly supporting Member States' efforts to address these threats through advocacy and capacity-building assistance. For example, the UNESCO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are already working together, along with INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization and other partners, to assist Member States in protecting cultural heritage and countering the trafficking in cultural property. As CTITF Chair, and in the light of this debate and the resolution that was adopted today, I will encourage the CTITF Inter-Agency Working Group on Countering the Financing of Terrorism to develop new projects to help Member States protect their cultural heritage.

The United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, have demonstrated their determination to further integrate the protection of cultural heritage in their counter-terrorism work. With the support of United Nations entities, Member States are strengthening their legal frameworks and criminal justice systems and enhancing their collaboration to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks against their cultural heritage. I believe we can, and must, do even more. Resolution 2347 (2017) provides a good basis to do just that. The United Nations stands ready to do its part.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bokova.

Ms. Bokova: Allow me, first of all, to express my deepest sympathy to the Government and the people of the United Kingdom following the deadly terrorist attack in London, which reminds us of our responsibilities to fight extremism and terrorism.

(*spoke in French*)

Allow me to express my sincere emotion at the adoption of historic resolution 2347 (2017), which demonstrates a crucial recognition of the role of cultural heritage in maintaining peace and security. Heritage is our identity. As I look to the members of the Security Council, I see images of the pyramids of Egypt, the

Island of Gorée in Senegal, Mount Fuji in Japan, Red Square in Moscow and Qhapaq Ñan in Bolivia and sites in other countries of Latin America.

Cultural heritage tells the story of peoples in all their diversity. It embodies the points of reference and values that define our shared humanity and ensure the cohesion of our societies. Some have given their lives to defend it. As German poet Heinrich Heine wrote, everywhere men burn books and culture, they end up burning other men. History has too often proved that to be true.

The deliberate destruction of heritage is a war crime. It is also a tactic of war to accelerate the long-term degradation of societies, as part of a strategy of cultural cleansing. That is why defending cultural heritage is more than a cultural issue; it is a security imperative that cannot be separated from the protection of human lives.

Hidden behind the beauty of Palmyra is a story of cultural exchange between Asia, Persia, Rome, and the identity of the Syrian people. At the Shrine of Jonah in Mosul we see the interaction among Judaism, Christianity and Islam — a symbol of unity.

Cultural heritage demonstrates the existence of cultural dialogue. It tells us our history and suggests a shared future. Extremists know this, and that is why they seek to destroy it. In adopting resolution 2199 (2015), which prohibits trade in cultural property from Iraq and Syria, the Security Council struck at the heart of violent extremism through its financing, and entrusted to UNESCO, INTERPOL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) the responsibility to lead the fight against trafficking in antiquities. That resolution has already led to significant results.

In a global movement launched by UNESCO, approximately 50 States have already strengthened their legislation and are sharing information to dismantle networks and to facilitate restoration. UNESCO, INTERPOL and UNODC are working like never before with customs services, the private sector and museums to bolser cooperation against drug trafficking. The resolution just adopted represents a huge step forward, which reflects a new vision of the links between peace and heritage. I commend France and Italy and all the other co-authors for this initiative.

Italy has created the world's first special unit to protect cultural heritage in emergency situations, led by the Italian Carabinieri under Commander Parrulli, who I salute here today. France and the United Arab Emirates have just launched a new fund, which already has more than $75 million.

The UNESCO global strategy, adopted in 2015, is based on a clear understanding of our responsibility to coordinate international action. In our role as custodian of international law on cultural heritage, we are crafting common policies and standards through the implementation of The Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, and the 1972 World Heritage Convention.

As soon fighting ceased in Palmyra, Aleppo, Nimrud and Ashur, UNESCO was on the ground to take preliminary measures to secure sites and prevent further damage. We have raised awareness among the armed forces in Maly by distributing 8,000 heritage passports, such as this one, so that each soldier knows the location of sites and their cultural significance.

I commend the Security Council once again for including the protection of cultural heritage in the mandates of peacekeeping forces. Given that cultural heritage is, as it were, on the front line of conflict, it should also be at the forefront of peace.

UNESCO is working with the International Criminal Court to end impunity for war crimes against culture. Our cooperation has led to the conviction of individuals responsible for the destruction of Timbuktu's mausoleums, which are standing once again today after being rebuilt by UNESCO in an effort to speed up reconciliation and strengthen cohesion — just as we did 12 years ago in rebuilding the Mostar Bridge, destroyed by the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For everywhere culture rises anew, people rise with it.

Weapons are not enough to defeat violent extremism. Building peace requires culture as well, and it requires education, prevention and the transmission of heritage. That is the message — I hope — of this historic resolution and its immense scope.

The President: I thank Ms. Bokova for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fedotov.

Mr. Fedotov: At the outset, allow me to ask you, Mr. President, to convey my heartfelt condolences to the British Government and the people of the United Kingdom on the occasion of the terrorist attack in the centre of London. Our sympathies are with the families of the victims of this barbaric act.

The adoption today of resolution 2347 (2017) and the Security Council's continued commitment has helped to keep the spotlight on the involvement of terrorist groups and organized crime networks in the destruction, looting, trafficking and sale of cultural heritage. The need for action is more urgent than ever in the face of the mass destruction of heritage sites in Syria and Iraq and the seizure of thousands of objects near the borders of those countries, which may represent just the tip of the iceberg.

The destruction of landmarks — such as the Buddhas of Bamiyan, the Roman monuments in Palmyra and shrines and mosques in Tikrit and Mosul — are reprehensible attempts to erase human history. But the destruction and looting are also generating profits for terrorists through trafficking, carried out in collusion with organized crime groups. Those profits fund further acts of terrorism and enable yet more destruction and looting of cultural sites and archaeological treasures. This crime cannot be allowed to continue unabated.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been working in close cooperation with our partners at UNESCO, as well as with INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization and others, to strengthen national, regional and international responses. UNODC is providing technical assistance and capacity-building and facilitating international cooperation to prevent and combat trafficking in cultural property. That includes support to implement the International Guidelines for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Responses with Respect to Trafficking in Cultural Property and other Related Offences, adopted by the General Assembly in 2014.

Our support to Member States has its firm foundation in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. Those conventions enjoy near universal membership. They are applicable to organized crime, corruption and terrorism, and they provide the framework the international community needs and can use to prevent, criminalize, investigate and prosecute trafficking in cultural property, as well as its use to finance terrorist groups and to support return and restitution. Those conventions, which apply at all times, represent important foundations in peacebuilding and post-conflict interventions. they are our best hope for preventing and countering this crime and bringing perpetrators to justice.

The full implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption is especially essential, as trafficking relies on corrupt officials and dealers to enable looted items to cross borders and be offered for sale. This framework, alongside international instruments developed under the auspices of UNESCO and the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, can help ensure that national legal frameworks can deal with this crime; that investigative agencies are set up and able to act; that law enforcement and judicial officers have the training they need; that sound border management, as well as customs and anti-money-laundering controls, are in place; that international cooperation is supported; and that public and private actors, including museums, dealers and the tourism sector, assume their responsibilities.

We have treaties. We have tools. We have guidelines. And we have training materials. But we need to operationalize commitments more effectively, and we need Member States to provide more resources in the spirit of shared responsibility. In response, UNODC is seeking to shed more light on the dimensions of this crime to help the international community better target joint action.

We are pursuing funding for a project, in cooperation with UNESCO and other partners, to undertake a global study to, first, identify the main trafficking routes, modus operandi, extent and patterns involved and, secondly, to determine the critical criminal justice challenges countries are facing and to provide tailored assistance. I hope we can rely on members' support. UNODC's experience and research expertise in confronting transnational organized crime, corruption and terrorism remain at the Council's disposal to stop criminals and terrorists from profiting from the destruction and theft of our shared cultural heritage.

The President: I thank Mr. Fedotov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Comander Parrulli.

Mr. Parrulli: I thank the Security Council for giving me an opportunity to speak on this important day.

The Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage is the world's first police unit specializing in the protection of cultural heritage. Since its foundation, in 1969, it has been on the front lines in the fight against trafficking in cultural heritage. To date, our investigations have led to the recovery of almost 800,000 works of art and the seizure of more than 1 million archeological artefacts. We have investigated approximately 35,000 people and detained more than 1,000. Those figures demonstrate the Carabinieri corps steadfast commitment to defending the world's collective traditions and history.

More often than not, trafficking in cultural property is a transnational crime, which requires a transnational investigative approach. Objects are stolen from one country, smuggled across the border, or the borders, of another, and then sold illegally in another country — perhaps ultimately finding a home in yet another country. INTERPOL provides pivotal international police cooperation, but that is not always enough. The looting and smuggling of cultural property is a complex crime that requires a specific focus and unique expertise that goes beyond the usual toolkit of police personnel. The only way to successfully protect cultural heritage is through close inter-agency work across borders.

In that context, the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage serves as a model for other countries when it comes to engaging international cooperation at the judicial, law enforcement and specialist levels. We strongly advocate the setting up of specialized police units for the protection of cultural heritage in every country.

In our search for cultural artefacts that have been exported from Italy, we often end up helping other countries track down and repatriate their own looted properties. We have also deployed as part ot international cooperation missions, such as those to Nasiriya, Iraq, from 2004 to 2005, pursuant to resolution 1483 (2003).

The Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage also provides training, in Italy and abroad, for judges and prosecutors, police officers, customs officials and experts and practitioners from culture ministries. We recently signed technical arrangements with several national and international stakeholders.

In order to improve international police cooperation in the protection of cultural heritage, we share information, best practices and lessons learned. Our most powerful tool — the database of stolen cultural artefacts — stores more than 1.2 million images and files on stolen artefacts, as well as the more than 6 million pictures and descriptions of artworks covered by our investigations. Originally the world's largest archive of stolen artefacts, it is now a powerful data analysis tool for processing data entries and aiding our investigations.

Our latest initiative, the "Unite4Heritage" Task Force, made its successful debut in the aftermath of the terrible series of earthquakes that struck Italy in late 2016. The Task Force is a team of specialized Carabinieri Command personnel who work alongside civilian experts from the Ministry of Culture to assess the risks and quantify the damage to cultural heritage in crisis-affected areas and to devise the necessary action plans, including providing training courses for local staff, assisting in the safe removal of transportable artefacts from endangered or looted sites and strengthening the fight against looting and trafficking in cultural property.

Together with UNESCO, we are now working on a stand-by agreement to allow the deployment of the Unite4Heritage Task Force overseas under the United Nations flag. Meanwhile, we are liaising on a bilateral basis with several countries, including, most, recently Iraq. I just visited the UNESCO field office in Baghdad to identify venues of cooperation to address archaeological areas devastated and looted by Da'esh. The Unite4Heritage campaign has raised awareness of the threats to cultural heritage, mobilized players beyond the cultural heritage communities and expanded UNESCO's efforts to coordinate technical work among various specialized agencies and institutions.

In the light of the experience, success and cutting-edge work of the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, I am honoured to be here today to welcome the adoption of the historic resolution 2347 (2017). We also welcome the spirit of the resolution and its effective measures calling for unified procedures, stronger ties between Member States and police forces, broader definitions of crimes against cultural heritage and stricter regulations on the illegal trade of items with undocumented origins.

The President: I thank Brigadier General Parrulli for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

I call on the Minister of Culture and Communication of France.

Ms. Azoulay (France) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 2347 (2017) as a historic step in our common fight to protect endangered cultural heritage. We meet this morning in the Security Council, in the heart of a global city that symbolizes modernity — *In the Shadow of No Towers*, to borrow from the work by Art Spiegelmann. But this morning, given the subject of our meeting, we also are gathering in the lost shadow of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, which were ripped from our world and blown to smithereens, whereupon their mute power to move and inspire was lost. We are gathered in response to appeals for the manuscripts and mausoleums of Timbuktu, the stone colossi and the statues of the human-headed bulls from Mesopotamia.

Deliberate attacks on human cultural heritage are rooted in a desire to obliterate memory, reject the past and strip history of its meaning and lessons. It is the same destructive desire that targets the living bodies of women, men and children, but also the stone and clay of our heritage treasures held in museums. It is the same macabre desire, the same willingness to break what might have existed in the past in order to snuff out the hope of a future. We owe those people — the women and men — respect for their past. We must pass on their history to our children and to our children's children, because that history is part of the common heritage of humankind. We must stand with all of those who, sometimes at the cost of their own lives, seek to salvage those treasures of humankind from the abyss.

The international community would thus be supporting what Léon Blum rightly called the "conscience of the United Nations", namely, UNESCO. I wish to pay tribute to UNESCO's essential role in the protection of heritage and the promotion of cultural diversity as an instrument of peace and the moral conscience of humankind to remind us all that culture links people to their history and their regions. Thanks to UNESCO, States have committed themselves by adopting texts useful for the preservation of our common heritage. UNESCO's global mandate is more relevant than ever in a world where its fundamental values are often in jeopardy.

I also welcome the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and INTERPOL, which play a key role in preventing trafficking in cultural property by promoting judicial cooperation and raising awareness among States on issues that are still often misunderstood. I would also like to commend the presence this morning in the Security Council of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and of the Director-General of UNESCO, as well as to thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for his briefing.

I would also like to thank the British presidency, without whose efforts the joint invitation of France and Italy would never have seen the light of day. Allow me to express once again France's solidarity with our British friends who were attacked in the very birthplace of democracy, which is their Parliament.

The protection of heritage is a matter of civilization and an ethical issue that unites us all by way of our diverse affiliations. However, it is also a security issue, because illicit trafficking in looted cultural property during conflicts finances terrorist networks and is a factor in the development of armed conflicts themselves. Armed groups, in particular terrorist organizations, are strengthened by revenue derived from trafficking in cultural heritage. Stolen cultural objects in a country where war is waging then serve to perpetuate and intensify said conflict. Even after conflict, when peace is restored, heritage continues to play a major role in restoring peace as a symbol of resilience and unity for peoples whose blood has been shed. For all of the reasons I mentioned, the international community must take steps to act. This is a human imperative, a just cause and a key component of peace.

At this groundbreaking meeting this morning, the international community is taking action by way of the Security Council, which, for the first time, has adopted a comprehensive resolution devoted exclusively to the protection of at-risk heritage in armed conflict. This organ, whose responsibility is to ensure the maintenance of peace and security, is now fully equipped to deal with this particular issue through the text submitted by France and Italy. Of course, this issue has featured in other resolutions adopted by the Council in the past, but those provisions were limited and focused on specific areas, especially in the context of the fight against terrorism. For example, resolution 1267 (1999) calls for respect for Afghanistan's cultural and historical heritage, while resolution 2199 (2015) condemns the destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq and Syria — especially by Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front — and urges Member States to take appropriate measures to prevent the trafficking of cultural property from Iraq and Syria.

The urgency of the issue has led the Council today to underscore the importance of those resolutions and to become more broadly seized of the issue. In that regard, the Council can count on the contribution of the 43 States that met in December 2016 at the Abu Dhabi International Conference on Safeguarding Endangered Cultural Heritage, organized by France and the United Arab Emirates, which I would like to commend for its decisive commitment. In their outcome document, those countries called on the Security Council to support the achievement of two main goals identified by the conference, namely, establishing an international fund for the protection of at-risk cultural heritage and creating a network of safe-havens.

Today's unanimous resolution is both comprehensive and balanced. It reflects the international community's full determination at the highest level. I am proud to have presented it along with my Italian colleague.

The resolution addresses the issue of at-risk heritage in situations of armed conflict by for the first time dealing with all the threats — destruction, theft and trafficking — without geographical limitation and regardless of whether or not those acts are carried out by listed terrorist groups or other armed groups. It explicitly links the financing of terrorist groups with trafficking in cultural property and strengthens the operational tools put in place to deal with this issue in previous Security Council resolutions. It also better encapsulates the link between terrorist groups and organized crime. It makes mention of the main outcomes of the Abu Dhabi Conference with regard to international law. And it strengthens cooperation among the relevant agencies and bodies dealing with this issue, without duplicating or replacing their work, while also encouraging States to cooperate further and to take operational and substantive measures. Finally, it calls on the Member States to ratify the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its Protocols, as France has done, having just joined the United Kingdom as the first permanent member of the Security Council to ratify the 1999 Second Protocol. As part of this mobilization effort and, above all, its cooperation on this issue, France intends to continue to play its full part, in particular by providing $30 million for the fund announced at the Abu Dhabi Conference, which already has more than $75 million in its coffers.

To believe that the modern era can be based on forgetting the past is a dangerous path to take. This new age can come about only by building on the shoulders of the giants who preceded us. Today we need to preserve the integrity of the "great book" of humanity, as referred to by Victor Hugo in *Notre-Dame de Paris*. He talked about heritage as the "great book of humanity, the key expression of what it means to be human". Of course, heritage is a living organism, one transformed through the ages. But the passage of time will determine what must endure in history, not the destructive passions of men.

This resolution calls us collectively to wisdom and to respect the passage of time, of history. Working for the cause of peace means preventing the destruction of cultural heritage in a murderous attempt to rewrite history. And it means preventing the heritage of peoples from being hijacked to finance violence and crime against their own history. That is the meaning of the historic resolution that we just adopted this morning.

Mr. Amendola (Italy): Our generation faces unprecedented attacks against and destruction of cultural heritage by terrorist groups in situations of armed conflict. This is not only an attack against the past, but also against our collective future. It affects people's identity and hampers post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding. It undermines values such as tolerance, respect and inclusivity. It deprives minority groups of their roots. It fuels conflicts.

The destruction of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict can amount to a war crime or a crime against humanity. Together with the unprecedented scale of organized looting and illicit trafficking in cultural objects, such acts provide a source of income for terrorist groups, support their recruitment efforts and strengthen their operational capability to organize and carry out attacks.

For those reasons, and for the sake of our history, the protection of cultural heritage is a long-standing pillar of Italian foreign policy, and Italy is at the forefront of international efforts to safeguard and protect cultural heritage — including thanks to the specialized Carabinieri unit. We are also a staunch supporter of UNESCO and the outstanding commitments of Director-General Bukova. We promoted the adoption of a resolution on culture in conflict areas and support the implementation of the "Unite4Heritage" Campaign, including through our national Task Force, as we just heard from General Parrulli.

As the current Chair of the Group of Seven (G-7), at the end of March we will host the first-ever meeting of G-7 Ministers of Culture. As partners of the global coalition against Da'esh, we co-Chair, along with the United States and Saudi Arabia, the counter-Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant finance group, whose work includes promoting the swift implementation of resolution 2199 (2015) to prevent terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria from benefiting from trading in oil, antiquities and hostages. We also chair its subgroup on illegal trafficking in cultural property. Among the major bilateral projects in which we are engaged, allow me to mention our successful cooperation with the Government of Iraq on safeguarding its immense cultural patrimony.

As a Security Council candidate, we made cultural heritage an overarching theme. Together with Jordan, UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and INTERPOL, we organized a series of seminars aimed at raising awareness and considering improved responses. As a Security Council member, we are convinced that this organ should pay more attention to the protection of cultural heritage, in the belief that the Council and the international community can, and should, unite around this issue.

For those reasons, and thanks to Ms. Azoulay, France and Italy promoted this briefing and proposed a Security Council resolution specifically dedicated to the issue. I thank all the members of the Security Council for the constructive engagement that led to the adoption of the historic resolution 2347 (2017), as well as to the United Kingdom presidency for scheduling the meeting in its programme of work. I also wish to acknowledge all the Member States that co-sponsored the text.

The destruction of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and organized criminal networks is a reality, and this resolution addresses it with clear language and concrete operational measures. But this issue has a broader relevance in the maintenance of international peace and security, one that goes beyond attacks by terrorist groups. Today the Council is sending a clear sign of commitment and an important response to the destruction of cultural patrimony during crises and conflict. The resolution is a balanced instrument that addresses both preventive initiatives and measures devoted to countering illegal excavation and the looting of, and trafficking in, cultural heritage at the domestic and international levels.

States are encouraged to adopt appropriate measures, in line with their national systems and with international frameworks and standards. Harmonized legislation and coordinated operational solutions are indispensable to provide an effective response. The Security Council is committing itself and the dedicated United Nations bodies to assist Member States and to strengthen all forms of cooperation. We are confident that this effort will contribute to preventing and countering actions that destroy and damage cultural heritage and that provide important financial support to criminal and terrorist groups.

Integrating the cultural dimension into the prevention and settlement of conflicts is not only a moral obligation, it is also a political and security imperative. Raising awareness and mobilizing international efforts are necessary, but not sufficient. Bringing to justice perpetrators of crimes against cultural heritage is also crucial, including to prevent future attacks, as highlighted by the historic judgment of the International Criminal Court last September in the case of *The Prosecutor v. Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi* relating to the destruction of cultural heritage in Timbuktu.

All over the world the cultural heritage passed down from previous centuries represents a message of tolerance, cultural understanding, religious harmony and respect. Totalitarian elements want to destroy the remarkable historical patrimony of our humanity. With this historic resolution we reaffirm the basic values of our civilizations.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia thanks the briefers for their statements, above all Mr. Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. In particular, I would like to single out not just the statement, but also the leadership shown by Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO. I also thank Mr. Yuri Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Brigadier General Fabrizio Parrulli, Commander of the Italian Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, for their briefings.

Bolivia also welcomes the initiative presented today by the delegations of Italy and France. Resolution 2347 (2017), adopted today, is a call to the international community and to the various United Nations agencies to effectively protect cultural artefacts and heritage in places where there is armed conflict, especially where terrorist groups are operating, who not just seek to undermine the rights of millions of people but are also trying to obliterate the shared culturalheritage of humankind to finance their vile acts.

We categorically condemn the looting, trafficking, smuggling and the like of cultural property carried out by non-State actors and terrorist groups, particularly Da'esh and Al-Qaida, to the detriment of sovereign nations and peoples. We urge the international community to collaborate closely and make all necessary efforts to prevent acts of that nature. We also emphatically condemn the destruction of historic sites and assets as a strategy for denying the cultural and historic roots of nations and peoples through terror and intimidation. We once again reject all terrorist acts as unjustifiable crimes, regardless of motivation, place, time or perpetrators. We reaffirm the need for all States to combat that phenomenon by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law.

We also believe it is essential to keep in mind that one of the reasons we are facing the smuggling, trafficking, looting and destruction of valuable historic cultural property today, not only in the Middle East but also in other parts of the world is due, in part, to the destruction of State infrastructure and inadequate security forces or authorities to prevent the commission of such acts. It is important, in our view, to identify the causes of that phenomenon, which has been occurring primarily in the Middle East. We would probably not be gathered here to tackle this difficult matter had it not been for the interventionist policies and invasions of recent years that led to the emergence and rise of terrorist groups that the international community is now facing.

We note that the Council has already expressed its concern over resolution 2347 (2017), adopted today, noting that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other individuals, groups, businesses and entities associated with Al-Qaida, are generating income by participating directly or indirectly in the looting and smuggling of cultural property from archaeological sites, museums, libraries, archives and other locations in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic — which is being used to finance their recruitment and to bolster their operational capability to plan and carry out terrorist attacks.

The adoption of measures to combat that phenomenon notwithstanding, the general lack of effective control mechanisms in the international community has allowed ISIS and Al-Qaida to continue financing their murky operations via the looting, smuggling and sale of cultural property. That generated vast economic benefits, without which terrorist groups would not have been able to finance their criminal activities. The reduction or evasion of controls through tax havens, used by organized crime to legitimize its finances, only serves to undermine our efforts. We must rigorously investigate whether those terrorist groups have access to or are actually utilizing tax havens for those ends.

We wish to stress that the enforcement of today's resolution should focus on restoring historic sites and cultural property to the state they were in before the conflicts. It should also seek to neutralize explosive ordnances and demine those areas, as in the case of Palmyra, Syria.

We also note that General Assembly resolution 69/196 strongly urges Member States to apply international guidelines on crime prevention and criminal justice responses to the trafficking of cultural property and related crimes. In that connection, we call on all Member States to strengthen international cooperation and adopt joint measures to recover trafficked, looted, stolen or smuggled cultural property and, critically, to ensure its restoration and return to its place of origin.

While every case is different, many of the museums that now exhibit historic cultural property from other countries in their galleries, were also acquired through invasion, looting and other illegal means. Consequently, we are calling for enhanced policies for the restoration and return of that property, in a way that is consistent with instruments that have been approved by the United Nations.

Finally, we wish to express the special and specific importance of protecting cultural property in areas under foreign occupation, and stress UNESCO's key role in that crucial matter.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I thank the presidency of the United Kingdom for highlighting the importance of protecting cultural heritage as an imperative for humankind. We also convey our appreciation to the co-facilitators, France and Italy, for their efforts on resolution 2347 (2017), just adopted, which we were pleased to co-sponsor. We also welcome the briefings of Under-Secretary-General Feltman, UNESCO Director-General Bokova, Mr. Fedotov and General Parrulli.

We are witnessing the greatest threat to cultural heritage since the Second World War. Today, more than 55 cultural heritage sites are in danger of destruction in armed conflicts — 21 of them located in the Middle East and Northern Africa, in particular Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, Libya and Syria. That unprecedented scale of attack constitutes cultural cleansing. Kazakhstan, as a member of the World Heritage Committee, welcomes the international community's efforts and initiatives to protect those sites. We co-sponsored the decision of the 199th session of UNESCO Executive Board, adopted last April, on UNESCO's role in safeguarding and preserving Palmyra and other Syria World Heritage sites.

My delegation would like to make the following recommendation on the matter. We call on Member States and other stakeholders to fully implement the recommendations of global forums, inter alia, the Donors Conference on Safeguarding Endangered Cultural Heritage, held this week in Paris; the International Cultural Conference [COULD NOT FIND], held in Milan in mid-2015; the 4th International Cultural Forum, held in Saint Petersburg in December 2015.

Join the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas, spearheaded by France and the United Arab Emirates. Ratify and implement the relevant international treaties, conventions and other instruments, in addition to Security Council and UNESCO resolutions in that area. Provide trainings to prevent the illicit trafficking of cultural property. Support UNESCO's Heritage Emergency Fund and Unite4Heritage global campaign. Strengthen UNESCO's Global Coalition for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, as the Director-General's agenda for action on the matter and for the promotion of cultural pluralism. Introduce strict measures to prevent the legal removal of cultural heritage from archaeological sites being stolen from museums, trafficked and sold to private collections by terrorist groups. Such plunder has become a lucrative source of terrorist financing, replacing the diminishing income from oil resources. Ensure greater vigilance of all sources of financing, including money laundering and diverse markets, such as auction houses and the Internet — through which Da'esh runs nearly $100 million annually.

Utilize the INTERPOL database of stolen works of art and establish special police units for that purpose. The resolution of stolen cultural property is mandated under international law, so enhancing the effectiveness of procedures in domestic courts is critical. All should work closely with INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization, UNESCO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime — which should suggest key actions to ensure the protection of cultural heritage.

Finally, Kazakhstan is committed to the protection of cultural heritage as a fundamental tool of preventive diplomacy to support the development of peaceful societies, strengthen sustainable development and suppress terrorist financing.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): We are most grateful to the delegations of France and Italy for raising the subject of protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts. Events of recent history pushed that issue into the spotlight of the international community. We fully share the main idea of resolution 2347 (2017), adopted today — to prevent the destruction, trafficking, looting and smuggling of cultural property during armed conflicts.

How many of the Seven Wonders of the World is it possible to see preserved today? Some of them were lost to natural disasters, and others vanished because of human behaviour. The importance of the issue that we are discussing today was very succinctly articulated by François Bugnion, a renowned expert on international humanitarian law from the International Committee of the Red Cross. He said:

> "Close your eyes and imagine Paris without Notre Dame [...] Giza without the pyramids [...] Peking without the Forbidden City, New York without the Statue of Liberty, Moscow without Red Square and Saint Basil's Cathedral".

The international community has a special responsibility to safeguard objects of cultural heritage that represent our nations' identities and have long become an integral part of humankind's history.

During the time of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Emer de Vattel, the principle of making the distinction between military and civilian property, as well as that of respecting sites and places of worship and cultural significance, became one of the foundational elements of customary international humanitarian law. Since then, the international community has developed a wide framework of rules and procedures to protect cultural property from harm. The core elements of the respective regime are the Second Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the Additional Protocols of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. However, cultural property continues to be the object of destruction, looting and trafficking. In the aftermath of recent conflicts in Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa, the numerous barbaric acts committed against our very civilization still loom fresh in our mind.

Regrettably, the topic of today's discussion is also relevant to the situation in my own country as parts of its cultural heritage are being destroyed, looted, illicitly excavated and subsequently trafficked out of Ukraine — including, in particular, to the Russian Federation — all of which has resulted from the attempted annexation of Crimea and Russia's military intervention in Donbas.

Yet States are not the only perpetrators of crimes related to cultural property. There is a growing trend of such offences being committed by non-State actors, including criminal and armed and terrorist groups. Striking examples of the deliberate and systematic destruction of our common heritage by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida, the Taliban and their affiliates have been witnessed by the entire international community. As a result of such cultural genocide, future generations are robbed of the opportunity to admire the beauty of, inter alia, the temples in Palmyra and the sculptures in Al-Raqqa in Syria; the ancient cities of Nimrud and Hatra, as well as the renowned historic mosques and libraries of Mosul in Iraq; the Sufi shrines outside of Tripoli in Libya; the unique architecture of Timbuktu in Mali; and the statues of the Buddha carved into the Bamiyan cliffs in Afghanistan.

In targeting cultural heritage, terrorists not only draw attention to their activities and intimidate Governments, as well as the public. They also attempt to rewrite history and erase entire chapters from the collective memory of people. Moreover, they actively traffick in cultural property that is illicitly excavated or looted to fund their atrocities. As confirmed by numerous reports of the Secretary-General, UNESCO and other relevant United Nations agencies, it has become a widespread practice, thereby improving the ability of those groups to continue to commit terrorist acts. It is high time to take decisive actions to break that vicious cycle. That is why resolution 2347 (2017) is so important.

We commend the activities of UNESCO as a key player in the area of the protection and recovery of cultural heritage worldwide. Ukraine fully supports the Unite for Heritage campaign, as well as the draft action plan on the implementation Strategy for Reinforcing UNESC's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict. We thank Director-General Bokova for her personal commitment and dedication.

We hope that today's resolution will reinforce bilateral, subregional and regional cooperation in support of the respective efforts of UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization and other relevant international entities to protect cultural property, which constitutes our common treasure.

We would like to point out several important elements of resolution 2347 (2017), the first of which concerns the primary responsibility of States to protect their cultural property. Failure to achieve that goal is the result not of a lack of existing international instruments, but rather of States' will to abide by their commitments and obligations.

Secondly, there is the initiative to establish in-country safe zones for the preservation of moveable cultural property threatened by conflicts.

Thirdly, establishing inventories of cultural property and other items of historical, cultural and religious importance that have been illegally transferred from areas of armed conflict, notably from territories under foreign occupation, would be particularly useful for ensuring their future safe return to their countries of origin.

Fourthly, there is the matter of bringing to justice the perpetrators of crimes related to cultural property. In that regard, we welcome the respective efforts of all national and international jurisdictions and call for close cooperation between law enforcement and customs agencies in investigations, prosecutions, seizures and confiscations, as well as the return, restitution or repatriation of trafficked cultural property. We commend in particular the recent decision of the International Criminal Court that, for the first time, convicted a war criminal for intentionally directing attacks against religious buildings and historic monuments.

Last but not least, the proposed report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2347 (2017) should provide us with an opportunity to comprehensively examine the problem and assess its gravity and scale based on information provided by Member States to develop concrete recommendations and durable solutions.

We are ready to contribute to that process.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank the United Kingdom presidency for putting this item on the agenda and the briefers for their contributions here and the work that they do in their respective organizations with regard to this very important issue.

The destruction, looting and trafficking of cultural heritage not only inflict damage on the places and the peoples in the affected areas, but also untold damage is wrought on the understanding of our common history and shared humanity. The end result is that the knowledge, beauty and diversity of our world are all diminished for everyone. The destruction of the ancient city of Palmyra, the mausoleums and manuscripts of Timbuktu and the mosques of Mosul, among others, are wanton and needless acts of vandalism. Such iconoclasm has been seen before in all parts of the globe, yet the most recent wave is all the more cynical as it is often a front for the looting of artefacts for sale on the black market and for garnering publicity for those carrying out those barbarous actions.

Our primary concern, of course, in situations of conflict must be the protection of the life and dignity of civilians whose lives are destroyed because of war and instability. We must also look towards the post-conflict phase and how to rebuild peaceful societies based on trust and mutual understanding. In that regard, the destruction and disappearance of culture heritage can have profound and unanticipated consequences by obliterating unique historical and cultural values essential to providing us with an understanding of our past, present and future. The fact that armed groups and, in particular terrorist groups in ongoing conflicts finance their activity through the illegal trafficking of cultural property is of great concern. The sheer number of illicitly trafficked cultural objects confiscated in countries neighbouring ongoing conflicts in 2016 alone is a clear illustration of the extent of the problem.

The destruction, looting and trafficking of culture heritage in situations of armed conflict are not a new phenomenon. The protection of cultural property in armed conflict is firmly rooted in the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and customary international humanitarian law wherein under certain circumstances the intentional destruction of such cultural heritage may amount to war crimes. States therefore have a duty to investigate attacks against cultural property and bring perpetrators to justice. With that in mind, we welcome the recent judgment by the International Criminal Court in the Al Mahdi case. Moreover, UNESCO has agreed a range of conventions related to those issues, which together with the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, provide important tools to address them. Our common measures against terrorism, including against the financing of terrorism through the illicit trade of cultural property, also play an important role.

Sweden is in the process of adhering to the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and we encourage others to do the same. We also support the ongoing work of the Council of Europe in that area. We have taken a number of actions to implement resolution 2199 (2015), which condemns trade in cultural property from Syria and Iraq, such as setting up a national coordination function across relevant Government agencies. We have also reinforced national police capacity in the field of cultural heritage and launched a public awareness-raising campaign in line with UNESCO's global Unite for Heritage campaign.

We underline UNESCO's leading role in the protection of cultural heritage. We support the Strategy for Reinforcing UNESCO's Action in the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict, and we look forward to the action plan to implement it. UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization and States, as well as various institutions and individuals, contribute in valuable ways to preventing the destruction of and illicit trade in cultural heritage. It is essential that their actions support and complement each other.

We therefore welcome the adoption of resolution 2347 (2017), introduced by France and Italy, which we were pleased to co-sponsor. The resolution is an important step forward in the fight against the destruction, looting and trafficking of cultural heritage in conflict situations. We further commend the initiative taken by France and the United Arab Emirates to create safe havens for cultural objects, and we are studying with close interest ways in which that and other initiatives may complement each other.

A holistic approach will bring new perspectives. Sweden looks forward to the report of the Secretary-General as we look into how the Security Council can continue to address that important issue. Our cultural heritage is integral to our shared humanity. Its destruction in any part of the world leaves us all poorer. We owe it to our future generations to do everything within our power to protect our common cultural heritage.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I too wish to thank Ms. Bokova, Mr. Feltman, Mr. Fedotov and Brigadier General Parrulli for their enlightening briefing this morning.

My delegation congratulates the French and Italian delegations for their initiative leading to the adoption of resolution 2347 (2017), which Uruguay co-sponsored. We consider it to be a useful tool in the maintenance of international peace and security.

On previous occasions, Uruguay has expressed its principled position rejecting all forms of terrorism and armed conflict and supporting any initiative aimed first and foremost at protecting people, as well as those goods that form part of a nation's heritage and cultural tapestry. International cooperation is crucial to preventing the traffic in cultural works or objects and the use of such criminal activity to finance terrorism.

Uruguay deplores the destruction of cultural heritage, particularly involving religious sites and the pillaging and smuggling of goods out of archeological sites, carried out in situations of armed conflict by terrorist groups. We acknowledge that UNESCO should play a leading role in the protection of cultural heritage and draw attention to the Unite for Heritage initiative, which seeks to create a world movement of young people raising their voices to safeguard threatened cultural heritage, which should be preserved as a common goods. We would also point to the key role played by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and INTERPOL in the prevention of all trafficking in cultural goods.

The establishment of a network of safe havens, as referred to in resolution 2347 (2017), should meet the needs and requirements of the affected countries, in accordance with domestic legislation and applicable international conventions. Priority must be accorded to preserving cultural goods in the event of conflict in the territory of the affected country, only when the option of foreign safe havens is not available.

In such cases, UNESCO could provide coordination assistance between the affected State and the safe haven. Such coordination could include establishing agreements on modalities for the restitution of cultural works and heritage and, upon request, technical support and cooperation in transferring and preserving such goods. The second preambular paragraph of the UNESCO constitution establishes that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

Cultural heritage is one of the ways in which we can truly forge peace among nations. In the light of the new threats to States, including terrorism, we must continue to harmonize joint efforts to protect our cultural heritage, which is the symbol of the collective human identity and links us to our history. It is our duty to pass it on to succeeding generations.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the United Kingdom presidency of the Council for having convened this morning's important meeting. Similar thanks go to France and to Italy for having raised this very important subject at the level of the Security Council. We also wish to thank all of our briefers this morning for their interventions. In particular, we deeply thank Ms. Bokova for all that she has done and her ongoing efforts in her role as Director-General of UNESCO. UNESCO is the world's conscience, particularly regarding the preservation of the cultural heritage of all States.

The safeguarding and protection of cultural heritage from all destructive acts, including trafficking and exploitation for terrorist purposes, is an extremely sensitive subject, because it involves sites, monuments, museums and other tangible goods that are directly linked to the history and very identity of peoples and nations. Cultural heritage is therefore no less important in terms of value than land or even honour — as an intangible concept — for the peoples and States that own such heritage, or other custodians thereof.

Egypt enjoys a precious and rich cultural heritage that is appreciated, known and respected by all. We are therefore highly familiar with the importance and sensitivity of the issue. We need to safeguard our cultural heritage from destruction and trafficking, whether on the part of terrorist groups or in circumstances of armed conflict. As I have said, our cultural heritage is precious, respected, known and appreciated by all, and we are particularly sensitive to the importance of this issue, given our geographical positon on a continent and in a region where the majority of global and cultural heritage is to be found.

Against that backdrop and in the light of the importance and sensitivity of the issue of protecting cultural heritage, the Egyptian delegation reiterated in the negotiations of resolution 2347 (2017), which was adopted today, the importance of including in the resolution a number of principles and restrictions, without which our delegation would not have been able to vote in its favour. I would like to draw attention to the key principles and restrictions to which I have just referred.

First, we reaffirm that the key role is to be played by each individual State in the protection of its own cultural heritage. Efforts to protect cultural heritage during armed conflict must respect the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and be pursued strictly in line with international law. The importance of respecting a State's sovereignty is also key, as is respect for the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

We also reiterate that the protection of cultural heritage, including through the establishment of a network of safe havens, can be undertaken only with the support of the State custodian of that cultural heritage. Safe havens should be established only on its territory. Egypt rejects any interference, present or future, in the internal affairs of a State on the pretext of protecting cultural heritage. We reject the transfer of a State's cultural heritage out of its territory under the pretext of conserving it in safe havens. We have only to look at our own cultural heritage and that of other countries. That heritage is exhibited in the museums of third countries, which had seized that heritage and refuse to date to restore them to their States.

Secondly, it is crucial that UNESCO, as an agency that specializes in the topic of cultural heritage, continue to provide assistance to countries, at their request, so that they may be in a position to protect their cultural heritage. Furthermore, it is essential that the Security Council only deal with cultural heritage in situations where there is a threat to international peace and security, international counter-terrorism activities or an international conflict that figures on the agenda of the Council.

Thirdly, it is important States take the necessary measures to forestall and prevent illicit trafficking in cultural goods, particularly in areas of conflict, and specifically that committed by terrorist groups.

Fourthly, it is essential that States draft lists of cultural goods that have been transferred illegally during armed conflict and that, in that regard, they coordinate with United Nations bodies and relevant international entities in order to ensure the safe restitution of those goods.

Fifthly, we must affirm the possibility of including among the tasks of peacekeeping organizations the provision of support to concerned States, at their request, for the protection of their cultural heritage from destruction, looting or other similar crimes.

Moreover, the Egyptian delegation worked for the inclusion in the resolution a reference to the need to protect cultural goods and heritage in areas under foreign occupation. Unfortunately, objections of a political nature to our proposal meant that we were unable to include that key idea in the resolution.

Lastly, Egypt welcomes the adoption today of resolution 2347 (2017), in particular because the protection of cultural heritage is a noble objective. However, we wish to underscore, as we have done in past meetings, that it remains crucial for States to implement Security Council resolutions, including that just adopted. As such, we expect States to implement their commitments, in compliance with that resolution, and particularly in compliance with the principles and restrictions contained therein. We will not allow such provisions to be flouted.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I thank all the briefers for their participation in this meeting and for their valuable contributions to today's discussion.

Our delegation fully shares concerns over the unprecedented damage done to cultural heritage by supporters of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), Jabhat Al-Nusra and other terrorist groups operating in Iraq, Syria, Libya and other conflict zones. We believe that stamping out barbaric terrorism should be the specific goal of the international community in this sphere. Proceeds from the trade in cultural heritage remain one of the main sources of ISIS financing.

Over the past two years, the Council has made significant progress in developing instruments to combat the financing of terrorism. Resolutions 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015), prepared with the very active participation of our own delegation, touched on the issue of cultural heritage. At Russia's request, changes were made to the universal Financial Action Task Force standards on combating financing of terrorism, in line with those Security Council resolutions, which is welcomed in resolution 2347 (2017), adopted today.

However, the international community has not yet been able to fully cut off ISIS financing. In those circumstances, further work is needed to create a system that fully rules out any kind of economic cooperation with terrorists and establishes a comprehensive embargo on trade with ISIS. In the resolution just adopted, provisions are included, inter alia, on sanctions against persons and entities that aid and abet the trade in cultural heritage. We again call on all States to immediately submit to the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, any information that they have on sources of funding for terrorists, including evidence of acquisition of artefacts from territory under the control of ISIS and Jabhat Al-Nusra.

Urgent measures are needed to maintain for future generations the priceless treasure of culture in areas where terrorists and radicals are active. This issue is perhaps most pressing in Syria. The symbol of the trials and tribulations of the long-suffering people of that country was the ancient city of Palmyra, a jewel of human civilization. That city, which was seized and destroyed by terrorists, has now been liberated. It is our duty to help restore and give that monument back to the Syrians and the entire world.

The first step in that regard must be erasing the footprints of those who turned Palmyra into an arena for the demonstration of their inhumane, futile ideology, and a place of torture and crime. Palmyra is literally sown with mines and unexploded ordinance, preventing a genuine assessment of the destruction and attempts at restoration. Russia is already working to address this task, and those efforts would be helped by the creation of an international coalition on the demining of Syrian territory. We urge all partners involved in maintaining historical heritage to set aside their well-known differences and to do their part in a common undertaking, which will require, inter alia, significant financial investment. It is vitally important that today the Council has called on Member States, United Nations specialized agencies and other international structures to provide assistance in demining places of cultural heritage. We expect to see the active involvement of the United Nations Secretariat, UNESCO and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in such efforts in Palmyra.

A leading role in the preservation og cultural heritage is played by UNESCO. We support the Strategy for Reinforcing UNESCO's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict. In developing this document at the fourth Saint Petersburg Cultural Forum, we adopted a declaration on the protection of culture in armed conflict zones. It is necessary to pull together and forge coordination among the various international initiatives on protecting cultural heritage, thereby ensuring full effectiveness, including through a proper division of labour. For example, we need to avoid a situation whereby the international fund to safeguard endangered cultural heritage in areas of armed conflict, as announced in Abu Dhabi, would duplicate or even compete with the work of the UNESCO World Heritage Fund.

Once again, the scale of illegal trade in cultural heritage is testament to the links between terrorists and organized crime groups. The resolution just adopted again addresses this problem by building on the relevant provisions of resolutions 1373 (2001) and 2195 (2014). It also reflects important elements from General Assembly resolution 69/281 with regard to preventing illegal trade in cultural heritage. We support the strengthening and active use of the scientific analytical capacities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in this sphere, including the provision of specialized technical assistance to States. We note the contribution of UNODC in combating crimes against cultural heritage.

Once again, we wish to reiterate Russia's commitment to combating international terrorism and our willingness to develop specialized cooperation with all interested parties in combating the destruction of and illegal trade in cultural heritage.

In accordance with tradition, I must say a few words following the statement delivered by the Ukranian delegation. It showed that Ukraine used this discussion in the Council of a noble task — the protection of cultural heritage — just as it has always used discussions on any topic in a multilateral setting to continue its information propaganda war against Russia. This is a source of grave concern and we shall not respond to the inappropriate remarks they made.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the convening by the United Kingdom of this meeting on the protection against the destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman, Director-General Bokova, Executive Director Fedotov and Brigadier General Parrulli for their briefings.

As we speak, in some parts of the world, ongoing armed conflicts and rampant terrorist activities not only seriously jeopardize the lives and properties in affected countries, but also add invaluable cultural heritage as a target of attacks and as a source of terrorist financing through smuggling and trafficking, thereby causing heavy losses to human civilization. The international community needs to scale up its support for countries in conflict areas and cut off the channels for terrorist groups smuggling and trafficking in cultural heritage in a joint effort to protect cultural heritage against harm caused by conflict.

First, efforts need to be scaled up to support States in situations of conflict in building up their national capacity for protection. Countries in conflict areas need to focus more attention on the protection of their cultural heritage, formulate relevant protection policies, establish early warning mechanisms, join relevant international cooperation frameworks and continuously enhance capacity-building for the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflict. The international community, while respecting the sovereignty of the countries in conflict areas, needs to provide constructive support and fully respect the national ownership of all cultural heritage.

Secondly, efforts to combat terrorism need to be intensified. Terrorism has become the main threat to cultural heritage in conflict areas. Resolution 2347 (2017), which was just adopted by the Council, provides a framework for cooperation in preventing terrorist groups from destroying cultural heritage and smuggling or trafficking in cultural heritage for terrorist financing. All countries should effectively implement the resolution and maximize the role of the relevant Council mechanisms and build an information network against the destruction and smuggling of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and resolutely crack down on terrorist activities to destroy, smuggle and traffic cultural heritage.

Thirdly, international cooperation should be further strengthened. All countries should strengthen cooperation in the field of cultural heritage protection and cooperate in information-sharing and law enforcement cooperation in the fight against the destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict. The United Nations, the Security Council and the other specialized agencies, such as UNESCO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, should leverage their respective professional advantage and strengthen their coordination in accordance with the division of labour to form an international synergy for the protection of cultural heritage in conflict areas.

China has been actively supporting and participating in international cooperation on endangered cultural heritage and will continue to work with the international community to make a positive contribution to the prevention of the destruction and trafficking in cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): The United States thanks the Governments of France and Italy for taking the initiative to rally the international community to protect our world's common heritage from being used to further armed conflicts.

Over the past two decades, we have seen damage to and destruction of our shared cultural heritage on an unprecedented scale. Those engaged in conflict and terror deliberately destroy cultural property to create fear, undermine Governments and cause animosity among different groups within a society. The wanton devastation by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), Al-Qaida and others in Iraq and Syria, by the Taliban in Afghanistan, and by other groups elsewhere has taken a devastating toll not only on human lives, but also on our common cultural heritage. This destruction tears at the very fabric of our societies.

The policy of the United States Government is clear. The unlawful destruction or trafficking of cultural heritage is deplorable. We unequivocally oppose it and we will take all feasible steps to halt, limit and discourage it. The United States seeks to hold accountable those who engage in the illegal trade of cultural property and the perpetrators of deliberate cultural heritage destruction.

Enhanced international law enforcement cooperation to counter these destructive and destabilizing activities is already showing results. For example, the United States shared information with our international partners about the activities of the deceased Abu Sayyaf, a former high-ranking ISIS official who was responsible for financing the group's terrorist activities, including through the illicit sale of antiquities. Growing international coordination and cooperation among law enforcement and other agencies enabled the United States to take direct action in order to seek the recovery of these items.

We believe that there are no one-size-fits-all strategies for cultural heritage preservation in armed conflict. Complex situations around the world warrant a variety of responses. Many States have demonstrated the ability to safeguard their cultural treasures in conflict zones during times of crisis. It is a long-standing United States policy to preserve cultural heritage in situ whenever possible, thereby avoiding the need to remove cultural property from its country of origin.

The United States looks forward to strengthened international cooperation and to finding new channels of cooperation for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage in armed conflicts in order to preserve this priceless inheritance for future generations.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 2347 (2017) on the protection of cultural heritage in the event of armed conflicts and we appreciate the efforts of France and Italy in facilitating the negotiations on the resolution as co-pen holders. I also wish to thank the presidency for making all this possible.

In light of the increasing intentional attacks on cultural heritage by armed groups and terrorists, the adoption of this resolution represents a very important step in addressing a problem, which calls for a far more strengthened international cooperation. The resolution indeed has clear added value for it complements existing international legal instruments in the protection of cultural heritage.

We express appreciation to all the briefers: Under-Secretary-General Feltman, Director-General Bokova, Executive Director Fedotov and Brigadier General Parrulli for sharing their perspectives on the topic of our discussion. I want in particular to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Director-General Bokova for the major and critical contribution she has been making to ensure that UNESCO succeeds in carrying out its mandate. We are indeed grateful for this is a historical period when so much is going on to undermine our common humankind.

UNESCO is the custodian of that shared heritage. We have all witnessed in recent years armed groups and terrorists actively engaging in the looting, theft, pillage and destruction of cultural heritage as a war tactic and means of terrorizing the civilian population. They have also been involved in the illicit trade of cultural property to finance and support their activities and fuel conflict. International law makes it an obligation to safeguard and respect cultural heritage in the context of armed conflict. That includes taking all necessary preventive measures to protect cultural heritage in peacetime, refraining from attacking it and prohibiting any form of its pillage or destruction. It is in that context that the role of the Security Council could be both important and relevant. The primary responsibility of the Security Council in ensuring international peace and security demands that it not remain indifferent when armed groups and terrorists target the collective heritage of humankind that is symbolic of our common humanity.

International law provides special protection for cultural heritage, as well as civilian property. As such, States are required to take all the necessary measures within the framework of their criminal legislation to prosecute and criminalize individuals, groups or entities responsible for such crimes. Special care must be taken in military operations, including by United Nations peacekeeping missions, to avoid damaging cultural heritage. The Security Council should further strengthen its work to ensure compliance with the obligation on the part of States to prohibit, prevent and stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of cultural property in the context of armed conflict by armed groups and terrorists. In that regard, the role of Security Council Committees on counter-terrorism will be critical. Though they are narrow in scope compared to the resolution that we have adopted today, ensuring the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly 2199 (2015), 2253 (2015) and 2322 (2016), will also be significant.

Such efforts could be complemented by initiatives and cooperation among Member States in various United Nations forums. For instance, Ethiopia, in collaboration with other countries, joined an initiative to bring the issue of cultural heritage to the attention of the Human Rights Council, which resulted in the adoption of the action-oriented resolution 33/20, which we will continue to follow closely. Such efforts could be further complemented by bilateral, regional and international cooperation among States, including in the context of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNESCO, INTERPOL and other relevant international and regional frameworks. The Council might also consider mandating United Nations peacekeeping missions so as to protect cultural heritage from being attacked by armed groups and terrorists, based on the experience gleaned from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and where such mandates are deemed necessary and feasible.

Finally, as home to eight cultural World Heritage Sites, Ethiopia attaches great importance to the protection and preservation of cultural heritage. We have indeed been shocked and dismayed by the destruction of cultural heritage in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Mali and other parts of the world by armed groups and terrorists, which is an affront to all humankind. Our briefers have highlighted that last point in a very vivid and palpable manner. We therefore earnestly hope that the resolution that we have unanimously adopted today will contribute to safeguarding cultural heritage and countering the illicit trafficking of cultural property in the context of armed conflict.

It was a great opportunity for us to be able to co-sponsor resolution 2347 (2017).

Mr. Minami (Japan): At the outset, I would like to join others in thanking the briefers — Mr. Feltman, Ms. Bokova, Mr. Fedotov and Brigadier General Parrulli — for their insight on this important topic. I welcome the adoption of resolution 2347 (2017) and commend the leadership of Italy and France in that regard. The resolution is a significant step forward on this subject leading to concrete actions.

We are witnessing tragic instances in which cultural heritage is targeted to be deliberately destroyed, looted and smuggled by terrorist groups for the purpose of achieving or advancing their nefarious goals. Japan shares the widespread concern about the situation and strongly condemns those acts. The international community should promptly and collectively respond to that challenge, and I would like to state several insights that Japan emphasizes in that regard.

First, the universalization of the international frameworks to protect cultural heritage is crucial. Japan is a State party to the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property of 1970, and other related conventions. Under those legal frameworks, Japan introduced various domestic measures to prevent the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage. I would like to call on other States that are not yet party to those conventions to join us in our efforts.

Secondly, we should support the meaningful activities of UNESCO in the area. Accordingly, Japan established the Japanese Funds-in-trust for the Preservation of World Cultural Heritage, and we have thus far contributed $68 million to that fund. Through UNESCO, we have supported many projects in conflict areas, including Afghanistan, Cambodia and Iraq. Furthermore, I would like to underline the importance of the documentation and archiving of data related to cultural heritage. That would help minimize the potential damage by terrorist groups as well as facilitate criminal justice procedures.

Moreover, we should focus on capacity-building efforts. It is vital to foster human resources in targeted countries for the protection and restoration of cultural heritage. Training in such areas as theft prevention, early warning and the relocation of cultural heritage in armed conflict must be carried out for the sake of preparedness. Sharing best practices and lessons learned among intelligence organizations such as UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and

Crime and INTERPOL is particularly relevant in that respect. I am convinced that implementing such measures would contribute to preventing terrorist groups from achieving their goals.

Japan has been actively engaged in international cooperation since the early post-war period. The Japanese people understand how cultural heritage enriches our minds and lives through teaching us about our past. To steal or destroy cultural heritage is to steal or destroy our past and future. It is therefore clear that such actions seriously undermine international peace and stability.

Japan stands ready to continue working together with the other Member States and international organizations to preventing such atrocities.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Conference on Safeguarding Endangered Cultural Heritage, held in Abu Dhabi from 2 to 3 December 2016 on a joint initiative of France and the United Arab Emirates, has already allowed us to broaden the scope of our reflection on the crucial importance concerning the protection of cultural heritage in areas of conflict. It is a major challenge for which the international community — beginning with the Security Council — must quickly find a rapid and coordinated response. I would therefore like to enthusiastically commend France and Italy for their leadership with regard to that initiative, as well as you, Sir, for having organized this meeting allowing us to follow up.

I would also like to thank the following briefers for their respective quality briefings: Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO; Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and Brigadier General Fabrizio Parrulli, Commander of the Italian Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage.

I believe that, on a similar tack, this would be an appropriate juncture to pay tribute to the often anonymous but numerous and important actors who work tirelessly around the world for the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage of peoples. In that regard, I pay particular tribute to UNESCO.

Humankind has been scarred by the massive and brutal destruction perpetrated by terrorists in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq or Libya, as well as in Mali, where we have witnessed, powerless and alarmed, the destruction of tombs and precious manuscripts that are often hundreds of years old. I recall that Senegal actively contributed to the important Saint Petersburg Declaration of June 2012, condemning the destruction of the aforementioned tombs.

The spread of armed conflict throughout the world, exacerbated by the violent extremism advocated by terrorist groups, whose calling card is the destruction or looting and trafficking of cultural heritage, is an aggravating factor of the threat to world heritage. We must therefore take the physical and symbolic dimension into account in the international community's efforts to adopt new strategies to respond to the destructive and even nihilist fury of terrorist groups. We therefore think it important to begin to compile the most precise inventory possible of cultural goods and objects of architectural, historical, cultural and religious importance that have been illegally moved, removed or transferred from trafficked out of conflict zones. We must be able to trace such objects, in cooperation with the relevant international institutions, United Nations agencies and international stakeholders, such as museums and even private collectors, with a view to repatriating stolen goods.

Paragraph 4 of resolution 2347 (2017), just adopted, is key in its stipulation that

> "unlawful attacks against sites and buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, or historic monuments may constitute, under certain circumstances and pursuant to international law a war crime and that perpetrators of such attacks must be brought to justice".

The Senegalese delegation welcomes the recent decision of the International Criminal Court of 27 September 2016, which for the first time in the history of humankind identifies the destruction of a religious and cultural heritage site as a crime of war and condemns the perpetrators of such atrocious acts to an exemplary sentence of nine years. That sets an important international legal precedent.

The protection of cultural heritage is first and foremost the responsibility of the State custodian. The United Nations and other relevant bodies must provide requesting Governments with the support and assistance they need to establish national protection mechanisms. We also welcome the announcement made at the Abu Dhabi conference that a global fund would be set up to protect endangered cultural heritage, complementary to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund. It is also essential for States to strengthen bilateral, subregional and regional cooperation through joint initiatives, particularly in the framework of relevant UNESCO programmes.

Those who have spoken before me have described as historic the strong and unanimous message that we have sent through the adoption of resolution 2347 (2017). The resolution strengthens and expands the scope of similar, existing international instruments, including resolution 2199 (2015), the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, and the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, not to mention the relevant provisions introduced by the Security Council into peackeeping mandates, such as those for operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Mali.

Resolution 2347 (2017) offers a good road map and calls for more proactive global mobilization and multiform and multistakeholder cooperation. For all of those reasons, the delegation of Senegal supproted the adoption of the resolution in co-sponsoring it and voting in its favour.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

Let me begin by thanking our briefers this morning, welcoming the unanimous adoption of resolution 2347 (2017) and paying tribute to France and to Italy for bringing this issue to the Council.

Today, all our briefers and all members of the Council have really brought home the sheer scale of the problem that we face. Whether in Timbuktu, Palmyra or Bamiyan, this is an issue that goes beyond statues, beyond artefacts and beyond museums. What we are witnessing is a systematic and corrosive assault on history, religion and the very fabric of identity. What we are witnessing is, in many cases, war crimes. This is not just wanton pillaging and vandalism; this is a matter of international peace and security. Stolen statues in Syrian and Iraq do not just line the pockets of opportunists and looters; they provide a source of revenue for Da'esh. And in the region, the destruction of religious and cultural sites is about more than just bricks and mortar. Sectarian division can be fuelled by pickaxes and sledgehammers, just as it can be by bullets and by guns.

So let us respond to this cultural destruction with the same intensity and the same unity of purpose as we do to any other threat to international peace and security. Though this resolution today, we have taken a step forward in doing so. The unanimous adoption of the resolution shows the strength of our resolve and of our condemnation of such actions. It shows our commitment and determination to act against perpetrators so that we can combat terrorism, prevent conflict and protect vulnerable communities.

But as with so many issues before the Council, implementation is now needed. The United Kingdom will do its utmost to do so. That is why we have established a $30-million cultural programme fund to support projects that help to foster, safeguard and promote cultural heritage in countries affected by conflict. These projects are helping complete the new museum in Basra, helping to protect heritage and traditional crafts skills in Kabul, and supporting advanced archaeological techniques and technology for achaeologists across the Middle East and North Africa. It is an effort furthered by the British Museum, which is training Iraqi heritage sector workers so that they have the skills needed to assess and record the condition of their heritage sites and carry out rescue archaeology, as required.

It is already bearing fruit. A participant in the training has been appointed by the Iraqi state board to lead the assessment of the site of Nimrud, recently released from Da'esh control, and another participant is looking forward to returning to Mosul Museum soon. But it is not enough to train civilians. It is often the brave men and women of the armed forces who are at the front line of the threat against cultural heritage. That is why the United Kingdom last year set up a cultural property protection unit so that respect for cultural property is further integrated into the training and operations of our armed forces. This includes respecting domestic and international law, as well as the obligations of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its protocols, which we will ratify shortly.

The action we take as a Council or as Member States will count for little unless we show that there are real consequences for those who carry out these acts. To truly rid the world of this scourge, we need to deter and punish as well as prevent. Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi was the first person convicted by the International Criminal Court for attacking protected sites, but he cannot be the last. If we are to deter others from following his path, we need to see more convictions and more consequences. His story should serve as a warning to all those who choose to attack cultural heritage — a warning that the Council must ensure is heeded.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at noon.